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# CRIME IN CONCRETE

A new MANNING COLES thriller  
takes Hambledon to France  
after a notorious murder ring



out of the Crown, an amusement arcade barker had seen him enter the Red Cross, a policeman on his beat had observed him entering the Coach and Horses.

"Oh, dear," said Hambleton. "Was he—or more or less all right?"

He was weaving a bit, said the constable, "but he was all right so far as that goes."

A newspaper seller had seen him 20 minutes earlier in the Star. "Don't you know it?" Down the second turning on the left past the brewery. You can't miss it."

Hambleton sighed and plodded on. At least it was a fine night, it wasn't raining. He came within sight of the Star, which appeared to be harboring an altercation upon its doorstep. As he drew near, the little group of people parted and a figure emerged from among them which staggered across the pavement, tripped over its own feet and fell flat on its back in the gutter.

Hambleton picked him up, supported him, and said: "Really, Charlie?" in an exasperated voice.

Hambleton signalled a taxi which happened to be passing—he was always lucky with taxis—and pushed Charlie inside.

"Where we going?"

"To my flat," said Hambleton, and gave the driver his address.

On arrival, the taxi driver helped the porter to convey Charlie to the lift and Hambleton helped the transfer to his own door.

After half an hour of Hambleton's well-practised attentions, Charcoal Charlie sighed deeply, stretched himself, and stood up.

"Heaven knows how you did it," he said. "I've never been sobered up so quickly in all my life. I've met some experts in my time. What happens when the effects wear off?"

"You get sleepy, you retire to bed and sleep for about 14 hours at a stretch, that's all. It's a sort of Mickey Finn in reverse and I don't trouble you for me in Paris. Listen, Charlie. Can you draw a portrait from a description?"

"I have done so, sir, two or three times, but I never saw the original. I don't know how good they were. It depends a lot on how good the description is."

"Of course. Listen to this." Hambleton read out Charlie's description of his assailant, before he had finished Charlie's face fit up. He snatched out his sketch book and sat down at the table. Beneath his rapid crayon a face outlined into form. It was a face strongly Scandinavian in the wide, jutting jawbones and fairly Slavonic in the flatness across the eyes where the orbital hollows were almost entirely absent. The man was smiling, deep lines ran vertically down either cheek, but the cleverest thing about the drawing was the cold and ruthless falsity which showed plainly through the apparent friendliness of expression. Hambleton looked at the face strongly Scandinavian in the wide, jutting jawbones and fairly Slavonic in the flatness across the eyes where the orbital hollows were almost entirely absent. The man was smiling, deep lines ran vertically down either cheek, but the cleverest thing about the drawing was the cold and ruthless falsity which showed plainly through the apparent friendliness of expression. Hambleton looked at the face strongly Scandinavian in the wide, jutting jawbones and fairly Slavonic in the flatness across the eyes where the orbital hollows were almost entirely absent. The man was smiling, deep lines ran vertically down either cheek, but the cleverest thing about the drawing was the cold and ruthless falsity which showed plainly through the apparent friendliness of expression.

"Well," he said, and put his crayon down. "Charlie, what the hell made a man like you take to drink?"

"Oh, just things. Would this be a portrait of the man who tried to murder poor Tranter?"

"What gives you that idea?"

"I saw them together at the Spotted Duck one night last week, Thursday or Friday—Friday, I think. I went in there and saw George sitting at a table in the corner with two men, and this was one of them. Interesting face, I thought. I should have liked to go over and after to draw him. But I saw there were strangers in Tranter's company I thought it more tactful to keep away. They might have been talking business, you know."

"They were," said Hambleton drily. "The other man, what was he like?"

"Never saw his face," said Charlie. He flicked over the page and started again on a three-quarter back view of a square, solid figure with a thick nose, leaning forward over a table. "Most interesting from the little I did see, stupid-looking lump of dough."

"Look, Charlie, could you draw a couple more models of that other man's type? Quite like him, you know, but just that little bit different?"

"Physically or psychologically? Look," said the artist, starting another drawing. "Portrait of Mr. X as he might have been if he'd grown up a good

citizen instead of a moose. Very fancy picture, this."

It was uncanny and Hambleton said so. There were the same features but this time the man was frank, honest and obviously kind. As a portrait of Louis Magid it was practically unrecognizable.

On the following afternoon Hambleton went back to the hospital with Charlie's drawings and a bunch of grapes. Tranter welcomed him warmly. "You brought me some pictures to look at," said Hambleton, and gave him Charlie's drawings of Louis Magid and the two others which were very like him.

"Magid's 'im," said Tranter, unhesitatingly picking out the first which Charlie had done. "That's 'im to the life. These others, not so good, but that one—Charcoal Charlie do these?"

"Yes."

"Ah, I remember now. Charcoal came into the Spotted Duck while me and those two was talking. 'Ardly looked at us, 'e didn't, an' then come up with that 'Marvellous, ain't it?'"

Hambleton left him absorbing grapes and went to see Bagshott.

"My department had quite a session this morning about that man who attacked Tranter," said Hambleton. "They are very interested in him, very."

They think I am probably right in believing him to be Louis Magid and they are sending me over to Paris in the hope that Letord can put me on his track. By the way, have a look at this drawing. Tranter says it's 'im to the life. Could you get it photographed for me? My department would like some more of 'em, too."

"You shall have it. Why is your august department so interested in this fellow?"

"I told you last night that I thought he was working for that international gang they call the Alroy Circus. They have been going for some years now. They started off by stealing confidential papers and selling them to the highest bidder, then they graduated from there to blackmail and finally to murder—and I don't know if he's the fouler crime—"

Manning Cole is not one person, but two—the British writing team of *Adolphe Franconi* (Joe Manning and John Manning), who were both in the British War Office during the First World War, but, since by her own admission, been "independent." Mr. Cole was a newspaper engineer, who had been a writer, journalist, and garage proprietor. He spent two years in the infantry on wartime service and three more in military intelligence.

"I do," said Bagshott grimly. "Blackmail. It isn't quite so final as murder but it's a lot dirtier."

"You should know. Twice lately the Circus have taken to kidnapping, and nobody knows who their leader is or where he operates from. It's probably Paris, most of this sort of thing is worked from there, so I'm going across so see if I can get in on it somewhere."

"When are you going across?"

"Tomorrow. Can I have that photograph tonight? Thank you, could you add to your already unsurpassed greatness by sending it around by hand to my flat any time after 9? Splendid. Good-by, Bagshott. I'll send you a picture postcard of the Eiffel Tower."

Hambleton went straight from the Gare du Nord to see Letord at the Quai des Orfèvres and told him the whole story. Letord listened in silence with the photograph of Charlie's portrait propped up in front of him.

"Yes," he said when Hambleton had finished. "Yes, I know about this man. I thought that he was dead in Marseilles. There was a body found under some rubble which had Magid's papers in its pockets but there were reasons why the face was not recognizable. One moment."

Letord lifted one of his telephones and asked whether Insp. Collin was still on the premises. "He is," said Good. Ask him to come up to my room."

"He is not one of my men," explained Letord, putting back the telephone receiver. "He is of the Marseilles police, he is up here making inquiries. He may know Magid, it is worth asking."

"Certainly," said Hambleton as the door opened and Inspector Collin came in.

"Ah, Collin. This is Monsieur Hambleton from London. I don't think you have met Insp. Collin from Marseilles. Collin, look at this portrait. Do you recognize it?"

The inspector's mobile face darkened. "Louis Magid."

"You know him personally?" said Hambleton.

"But yes, monsieur. In Marseilles. I had him pointed out to me and it is not a face one forgets. Then, one night, I passed him in the street; he went his way and I mine. It was just after that that I found the child, with the chocolate he had given her still in her mouth. So then we looked for Magid and it was some days before they found a man's body under the rubble, with Magid's papers in his pocket. My superiors thought that it was his, but I was not satisfied. However, more inspectors do not spare what I thought was necessary. He was at Letord and then looked at the photograph again. "This is an excellent likeness. May I ask when and where it was made?"

"A few days ago in London."

"Indeed, monsieur? So it would seem that I was right. Is it known where he is now?"

"No. We think he is no longer in England. He made a murderous attack upon a man who is himself a criminal but who is a decent fellow and well liked. So not only are the police looking for him but the underworld also."

"He would have to leave the country, then," agreed Collin. "Do you think there is a good chance that he is come to Paris?"

"How should I know? I start my search for him here but who knows where it will lead me?"

"Precisely, monsieur."

"Thank you, inspector," said Letord. When Collin had left the room, Letord added: "There is your identification at least. Now you want us to catch him for you, do you? By the way, may I have a copy of this portrait?"

"I brought that one over for you. And I don't want him traced, I want him sent to me. I like to go by his own way and make his own contacts. I should like to be informed if he is seen so that I can follow him, that is all."

"Very well, I will try to get some people on to looking for him and if they see him you shall be informed."

"Thank you very much. By the way, Magid does not know me."

"Remain unknown, my friend. I beg of you."

Hambleton spent three days in Paris renewing old contacts, making fresh ones and wondering whether or not he had better pick up and go somewhere else.

He met a man named Jules whom once, several years before, he had been able to extract from an extremely awkward situation. They sat in the back of a café and talked about his sins and new crimes and Hambleton learned a good deal which might be useful. Eventually, Hambleton asked in a most casual voice whether Jules had ever come across a man called Magid.

"No," said Jules instantly. "No." Louis Magid? I never heard the name. What does he—"

"Then how did you know his name was Louis?"

"I must have heard it somewhere—one hears names mentioned, as monsieur knows. I don't know anything about him."

"What a pity," said Hambleton. "All I wanted to know was whether he is in Paris. He was in London lately but he has left there, and I should like to know where he has gone."

"Listen, monsieur," said Jules earnestly. "Let monsieur leave Magid alone, as we do. None of us wish to be mixed up with Magid or have anything to do with him."

"Who are the people behind him, Jules?"

"I don't know and that is the truth! I know nothing about them and I don't care. I don't want to be mixed up with Magid or have anything to do with him."

Hambleton left it at that, if Jules would not talk, there was no way of making him, but at least it seemed that Magid was in Paris.

When Hambleton returned to his hotel in the evening, he was called from dinner to the telephone. One of Letord's detectives reported that "the man from England for whom monsieur was inquiring" had been arrested and called called the Casation d'Or in the Rue des Tulleries in the Bastille area.

"At last," said Hambleton to himself. He abandoned his dinner, picked up his hat and went out.

## CHAPTER II

"SAW him plain," said Hambleton to Letord in the morning. "It is Louis Magid, there is no doubt about it. He was still in that markably inferior café when I got there. He crossed the Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine after he

came out, and there I lost him. Never mind, there is always tomorrow. You will tell your hawk-eyed minions, will you?"

Hambleton, dressed in a manner more suited to his country, made a habit of leaving his hotel by the back entrance. He spent a couple of days and nights wandering in a depressed manner about the Bassille area, looking for Magid and occasionally seeing him, always in the same district.

"It seems that Magid is thought to come far from home, wherever 'home' is," said Hambleton, reporting to Letord. "Sometimes he has a man with him, not always the same one. Yesterday's playmate could have been the one man who was with him in London. Or merely one of the several million men who go about looking like that. Tonight I'm afraid I boomed in a mild way. I went into a cafe he went to sometimes. I thought I might come in and he did, but unfortunately he had a fellow with him whom I had met before under unfriendly circumstances. Beppi le Chien, remember? I thought he was in jail."

"He finished his sentence and came out," said Letord. "I trust he did not see you."

"He did, yes. Whether he pointed me out to Magid I don't know, but they were talking closely together and Magid looked around several times, but he is always doing that."

Two evenings later Hambleton saw Magid come out of a hide turning aside and walk away. He was alone and Hambleton was reasonably sure that he himself had not been seen. Hambleton followed the man with every care and every act which long patience had taught him, and finally had the satisfaction of seeing Magid turn in under an archway which led to a tiny and very dirty courtyard. Hambleton glanced in as he passed, the yard appeared to be completely enclosed by the buildings around it and not to have any other exit. Magid, therefore, must have entered some one of the doors and be within some building; two hours later he had still not come forth again.

Hambleton went home.

He was breakfasting late the following morning—even he had to sleep sometimes—when he was rushed to the telephone by the other and was Letord, saying that he thought Hambleton would find a visit to the Prefecture interesting and possibly informative. "We have Beppi le Chien."

"I'll be right there," said Hambleton.

"What has Beppi done this time? Or did he rush to your door crying 'Shield me from the oppressor'?"

"At bottom, it was more like that," said Letord.

"He was leaving Paris—"

"Why did he want to leave Paris?"

"That is precisely what I propose to ask him. I have not seen him yet and it occurred to me that you might like to be present."

A few minutes later the door opened and Beppi le Chien was shown in. Letord sent away the attendant constable and started at once.

"You were arrested this morning at Versailles, accused of being in charge of a stolen motor van."

"I was not in charge, monsieur," said Beppi, politely but firmly. "Excuse me, I was only sitting in the thing. I did not even know it had been stolen."

"Oh. Then how did you come to be sitting in it?"

"Because I wanted to leave Paris."

"There are trains," pointed out Letord.

"I wish to go to Marseilles, monsieur, and I have not the money to go all the way. So I said to that constable I wanted to go to Hales and beg a lift from one of the produce lorries as far as possible and then perhaps I could buy a railway ticket for the rest of the way."

"I see. Now will you tell me why you were in such a hurry to leave Paris?"

"It was the company in which I found myself entangled. I do not like those people. They put me into trouble with you and with Dijon, you will remember, monsieur. There was a man killed but I had nothing to do with the murder. Indeed, I was pleased of this charge, monsieur."

"I remember. The man who did it died in the prison hospital of influenza, believe it or not," said Letord to Hambleton. "So we were spared the trouble of trying him. So you ran into some of the gang again, Beppi."

"One man in particular, yes, but he had others with him."

"What is the name of the man who accused you?"

"—I think he has several—"

"Is one of them Louis Magid?"

"That is so, monsieur."

"What do you know about this gang?"

But nothing, monsieur. He and his friends have a little scheme on hand and they want a reliable man to do it. Then I tell him I don't want a job, I've got one of my own, but he takes no notice, he never does. He says I will be told in two days when I am to do, and where, and when, so I spend my spare time keeping out of his way, but last night he waited for me coming from work and said 'Tonight at the Canston at 21 hours.' So I go up and spend the night in a bath of the Boulevard Clichy and I am so afraid to come out again that I am too late and miss the lorries, and you know the rest."

"Where does he live, do you know?"

"I was told he has a room on the first floor in a little court off the Passage Stinville, but I do not know if it is true. It is opposite to a tailor's I was told. And now may I leave Paris?"

"I don't see why we should wish to keep you," said Letord.

"I should certainly agree, if you do not want him," said Letord to Hambleton. "A man who wants to keep out of trouble—"

"Should be encouraged," finished Letord. "You must not be seen leaving here, Beppi—"

"I am not, I am not. It would destroy me."

"Beppi," said Hambleton. "Where do this gang really operate from? Somewhere here in Paris, I suppose."

"I am not sure, monsieur. I think it is farther south. Not Marseilles or I would go somewhere else! Somewhere central. I do not know, but when we did that job at Dijon I had the idea the centre was in Paris. I don't know what gave me the idea."

"Some phrase like 'run over and see monsieur le chef, it won't take long,'" suggested Hambleton.

"That is true, but I can't remember it."

"Just an idea. Not Dijon itself, I don't think so anyway."

On the next night Magid came out of the courtyard and passed within six feet of Hambleton, who was broken down. The man had a relaxed air for once, as he went by he was whistling tunelessly between his teeth; Hambleton waited 10 minutes, walked quietly along and slipped into his jacket. Before he had taken three steps a man came up behind his shoulder, close enough to touch him. He was near an open door.

The man turned like a flash and hit the man hard under the jaw, following it with another even harder between the eyes. The man slumped to the ground and the cosh which he carried rolled away into a dark corner. Hambleton murmured some words.

On the first landing of the house a door faced him which looked as though it were habitually used; another in the corner had had its handle removed and upon examination proved to be locked. A few seconds later the door of the first dark swing swung quietly open upon a dark and silent room.

Hambleton went in, gun in hand and listening intently for the slightest sound, but there was none. He went on, looking along the corridor, still hanging in the air and smelling of Turkish tobacco. Magid always smoked Turkish cigarettes. There was an ash-tray half full of cigarette stumps, mainly Turkish but also a few Turkish. Magid had had a visitor, and why not? Still Hambleton felt uneasy though there seemed no reason for it. There was no one in the room, not even under the bed.

He examined the room carefully, but there were no papers of any kind, not a card, not a letter, not even a book. Hambleton's little pencil torch began to fail, he remembered seeing a book of matches in one of the table drawers but the first dead swing so he took it out and pocketed it sooner than find himself in the dark.

He was in the act of relocking the door again from the outside when a rushing hard and round voice came against his ribs.

"If monsieur has quite finished, we should like a little walk with him—"

Hambleton's gun was removed from his pocket and he was hustled down to the ground floor and down to the cellar. A light was thrown down on within the cellar itself. Hambleton was pushed inside and the door bolted upon him. His caper then leaned against the outside of the door and talked to him through a grille.

"Monsieur no doubt thought himself unobserved, but it was not so. In the Louvre I was looking out of the window when I saw monsieur come in through the archway. Michel came up behind him and monsieur knocked him down. Michel, he is still out there."

The man stopped talking to light a cigarette, the smell of it drifted in through the aperture and Hambleton immediately realized what had happened at his own door. The first floor of the place smelled of Turkish tobacco, that was true, but there was also and more recently the acrid smell of a Gauloise also.

Twenty minutes later there were steps on the stair again and the door opened to show him first a gun with a section of fire behind it and then the whole figure, which he recognized. Louis Magid came in the cellar with the other man at his heels.

"Hands up, monsieur, please," said Magid in that oddly soft voice of his. "Right up, above the head, and back against that wall, Gaston!" The chains?"

Gaston went out of the door and came back again immediately with two lengths of thin but strong steel chain; both had a handcuff at each end. One was about 18 inches long and the other about a foot long. The shorter one was used to shackle Hambleton's ankles together. Hanging from a staple in the wall was a third chain with a padlock on the free end. When this was locked around the links between his ankles he could shuffle a few inches either way and that was all. The other chain linked his wrists together like a long pair of handcuffs.

Gaston went out with two packing cases and what could only be described as a polite fuss was made in putting one of them in Hambleton's corner so that he could sit down and lean back against the wall with his legs-chained uncomfortably at his ankles.

"I am sorry for all this," purred Magid. "Our prison accommodation is horribly substandard but we do our best to do our duty. At our disposal, such as they are. Gaston, search him."

Gaston did as he was bid and produced from Hambleton's pockets a couple of thousand francs in small notes, a couple of hundred francs in banknotes, a couple of hundred francs in banknotes, two handkerchiefs, a book of matches, a few burglar's wallets. This produced squeals of delight from Gaston.

"But it is beautiful, are these tools? How well made of the best steel! Truly, with this kit one could open the strong-rooms of the Bank of France. Look, Louis?"

"What is his paper?"

"Monsieur is not carrying any," said Gaston.

"That is all that there was in his pockets."

"Oh, indeed. Monsieur, with respect, may I have your distinguished name?"

"King Kong," said Hambleton, and Magid shook his head.

"You mock me," he said sadly. "We will not discuss the subject further tonight, Louis, and I am tired. Good-night, monsieur. Breakfast will be served in the morning. Good-night, Gaston. You may return tomorrow one handsakerchief."

"One moment," cried Gaston, dodging out of the doorway. "one little moment while I fetch my bed."

Hambleton leaned back in his corner, folded his arms and closed his eyes. He did not open them again until he received a sharp and somewhat rough tap on his forehead. He opened his eyes and found a couple of blankets. As he entered, the door closed behind him and the long bolts outside grated home in their sockets. Presumably Magid did that, as there was no longer in the room and quiet steps could be heard on the stair.

Gaston straightened out the mattress on the floor and threw an extra blanket on it. If Hambleton thought that the blankets were any comfort were for him he was mistaken. Gaston whistled "Aupres de ma Blonde" and settled himself comfortably on his packing case. Too soon to doze down for the night, he remembered Magid's words. "The first things he brought out were a couple of keys on a string, he saw Hambleton's eyes upon them and grinned."

"You do not need to worry about these," he said, and put them back without haste only to produce Hambleton's cigarette instead and, as Tommy noticed indignantly, his lighter. Gaston lit a cigarette for himself and then he went to bed.

"It is very pleasant," he said, "to have someone to talk to. It helps to pass the time. Of course, I'm not supposed to talk to monsieur, but who can sit in silence hour after hour? It is not possible, it is not possible."



that. Besides, what does it matter since monsieur is as one already dead? When they have asked him their questions, Louis will come down with his little gun, and that will be the end."

"Does this often happen?" asked Hambleton coldly.

"Oh, now and again, when it is necessary. Anyone who is brought down here is dead, really. Sometimes they are already dead when they come here, but I will have it that way, I think. I can't think why. Still, I am glad to do what I am told, so I do it. I had one about a fortnight ago and it was very dull. It was no good talking, really, because he couldn't answer. It must have seemed rather a long night," said Hambleton.

"Oh, I got tired of him after a bit and went to sleep, and they woke me up by bringing the barrel down in the morning. One can't let things get one down, can one?"

"The barrel? What for?"

"To put him in, of course. We bring down sand and cement and I mix them together dry, with a shovel. Monsieur must have seen it on our building site, you see. Three parts of sand to one of cement. Then we mix it in the barrel—dry, yes, and pour in buckets of water from that tap in the corner and stir it up with a broom handle, it's outside the door there but I don't suppose monsieur noticed it when he came in. It makes a good padding, raised like that, nice and sloppy. Then we push the body in and as it goes down the cement rises, being sleepy, you see, and covers it all up. Then we put the lid on, wait till it hardens, and run it down to the Seine. It sinks at once, of course, being heavy, and never rises again."

Gaston had another of Hambleton's cigarettes. He did not offer one to his owner, and Hambleton would not ask for it. When it was done, Gaston lay down on the mattress, put his pillow under his head, rolled himself in both blankets and went to sleep. He also noticed someone came down the stair and shouted to Gaston who woke up, sat up and answered. "The door was opened and a man came in with a tray bearing two very strong cups of coffee and some thick slices of bread and butter."

"Breakfast, monsieur," said Gaston cheerfully. The other man, who had a swollen jaw, was presently Michel, "monsieur," he recalled. "The coffee was at least hot and the stale bread was food-of-a-sort. Hambleton began to revive. At last, one night was over."

Presently a booming noise was heard and Michel returned with a tall barrel which he rolled into the cellar and stood up near the tap in the corner. The barrel contained only a bucket, which he took out and set under the tap.

He went out and returned again with two bags of cement (soud, one at a time). Cement fonde is the quick-setting variety and Hambleton found himself regarding it with increasing interest. Michel came back again with two sizable sacks of sand. They were tied up tightly at the top and were merely rolled down the stairs and dragged into the cellar by the two men together. All this time Michel had not spoken one word, he went out and shot the door behind him.

"Now very talkative, that one," Hambleton said. "Michel? But never. He can speak, he is not dumb. He is, however—how does Louis put it?—mentally subnormal."

Gaston untied one of the sacks of sand, cut open one of the cement bags and made quite a large heap on the floor of a mixture from both. When he had thoroughly mixed that heap, he shoveled it all into the barrel and stared another. There was no doubt that he was a conscientious worker.

"I think there is nearly enough," he said thoughtfully. "Monsieur will take up a good deal of room."

"Gaston?"

"Monsieur?"

"I have heard that when a man is to be executed he is given a glass of rum and a cigarette to calm his nerves."

"Also, monsieur, I have no rum, and monsieur's nerves appear to be completely calm already."

"But the cigarette, Gaston?"

"The cigarette. I cannot see why monsieur should not have one if he wishes for it. I have always been of a generous nature, monsieur shall have one of mine." Gaston threw him one of his awful "blees." Hambleton caught it and put it in his mouth.

"I have no light, Gaston."

"Of course not, I have no monsieur's here."

Gaston flicked the lighter into flame, came across the room and held it to the end of the cigarette. It was the first time in all those hours that he had come within Hambleton's reach while they were alone.

Hambleton brought his hands up as though to steady the cigarette, flung the chain around the man's neck, so to encircle it, put his knee as high as it would go against Gaston's body and pulled with all his strength.

## CHAPTER III

WHEN Gaston finally left off struggling and went into Hambleton's bed room to drop the barrel, took the key of the handcuffs from his pocket and released himself from his chains.

Presently someone would come down. If it were Michel or Louis Magid, one glance would tell them what had happened and there would be a fight. Possibly Hambleton's pistol was still in Gaston's pocket, but a scuffle showed that someone had unfastened him. Still, there was the shovel and useful weapon. Hambleton took it out of the corner and set it ready to hand.

But if the next visitor were someone sent from monsieur le chief, and he was expected soon, it was just possible that he would not know so insignificant a person as the late Gaston. In which case—

Hambleton tore off his own jacket and crammed it into his shirt, still in his shirt-tails. It was not wrong while changing trousers also, those which Hambleton was wearing were shabby enough and a sight in that dirty cellar had galled them all over. But Gaston's jacket was of a memorable check and his cap went with it. Hambleton took them both and then began drawing buckets of water at the tap, pouring them into the barrel and frantically stirring the mixture with the bucket handle. The cement mixture seemed to take up incredible quantities of water and still remain stiff like dough. He labored until the water poured off him and the mixture was nearly half-liquid, and then suddenly the mixture went liquid like thick soup.

He lifted Gaston from the floor, heaved him up so as to rim the barrel and began to slip him in head downwards, but his coat sleeve caught on a nail—

"Either the man who came over rubber-soles or the barrel had been too occupied to hear steps on the stair, for suddenly a black boot backed against the door opened. Hambleton stopped back against his shovel, but this man was a complete stranger."

"What is all this?" said the angrier. "Who are you?"

"Give us a hand," growled Hambleton, "he's got stuck." He tugged furiously at the coat sleeve and freed it, and Gaston fell in until only his legs remained showing. "Come on, can't you? If this stuff begins to set—"

With the stranger's help the business was finished and the cement rose to within a couple of inches of the top, covering all. Hambleton laid the shovel flat, felt the shoe close behind him and wiped his face on his sleeve.

"That's all right," he said. "Now it's just to let it harden and put the lid on and we can roll him away."

"You blustering fool," stormed the other man, "is that the Englishman?"

"Englishman, was he? How was I to know? I was told to keep him quiet!"

"You were told to keep him safe because we wanted to talk to him, idiot, and now you've killed him. Try a good mind to hand you one of the police for murder or execute you yourself—Magid's away for the day. Don't stand there gibbering like an ape. Go and find Michel and bring him back here at once. Get out!"

Hambleton went.

First he rang up Letord's office and found him there.

Letord, Hambleton here. I can't say much now, but send a couple of your best men to watch that court in the Passage Saint-Louis. There's a man there I want followed—a tall, thin man with a crooked nose. He added further details of appearance and dress, and went on: "If he leaves there he may go to the Canton d'Or in the Rue des Tallemands to look for a dirty little thing named Michel with two black eyes. He's not important, the

other man is. He's in the cellar of that place in the Passage Saint-Louis for me to come and speak with Michel. I'll come along to you as soon as I can, right away if I'm lucky. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver and stood for a moment in the night. Gaston's jacket was so horribly conspicuous, someone might recognize it and wonder. He looked at himself in a small mirror on the wall and was horrified at what he saw. No taxi driver would have recognized such an object in a nice clean taxi. He cleaned his face superficially with a handkerchief and walked out.

From the upstairs he selected a long dark coat and a pair of gaiters, both elderly but passable, and put them on in the doorway. With the coat collar up and the hairpin pulled down, he was much more presentable.

He strode away from the driving rain and five minutes later stopped a riving taxi.

When he reached Letord's office he dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief. Letord took one look at him and offered him cognac.

"Thank you, I'd love some, and if there were a plate of sandwiches with it—"

"There shall be."

Hambleton finished the last crumb of sandwich, took out a cigarette and, in feeling for his lighter, came upon the little packet of book-matches from Magid's room.

"These came from there," he said, "but I fear they won't help. No local affiliations, no useful hotel in the provinces to give us a lead, this only remains. Citizens' Party. He opened the flap of the packet. Across the inside of it were scribbled two sets of numbers, one below the other, thus:

1541

1929

"Dear me," said Hambleton, and passed it to Letord. "What would you think those represented?"

"Telephone numbers?" They could be, but they were long. Pages in a fat book? A book of reference, for example. Item numbers in a list."

"Any thing. You may have it, Letord, Exhibit A. Well, I think I'll go and find a bed for the night."

"I'll send you back to your hotel or whirl up a taxi."

"No, thanks, Letord. I've been thinking. I look pretty sorry, already. Two days without shaving and my best friends won't wish to know me and I have a feeling that that may be useful. I think I'll get a bed at Karriotti's in the Rue de Charonne."

"But that's a doss-house!"

"I know. That's what I want. Let us be accurate, it's what I need. I want to sit without trace into the submerged town and come up with a new identity and background, Letord."

Two days later Hambleton returned, less conspicuously dressed but a great deal scruffier.

"You were right about Karriotti's, it is not a three-star hotel. First of all, did you have any bright ideas about those numbers on the book-matches?"

"Bright, but not useful," said Letord.

"Oh, but you're right. I had one though whether it's any use is another thing—may I see it again?"

Letord took Exhibit A, one packet book-matches hardly used, from the safe.

"Thank you," said Hambleton. "Now then, 1541 and 1929. Let it write them down here. Suppose we put a fullstop in the middle of each, thus, what happens?"

"Times," said Letord. "Fifteen hours 41 minutes and 19 hours 29 minutes."

"It could be, couldn't it? Guessing again, could they be train times, do you think?"

"I should imagine," said Letord, a little blankly, "that it would be a very nice surprise if they were not the times of some train leaving some place and arriving at some other place, but the choice is painfully wide, is it not? Even assuming that they are train times at all."

"You know, you and Chief Supt. Bagshot ought to get on well together. Remembering that this thing was found in Magid's room and that Magid is in Paris could one of these times refer to a Paris arrival, do you think?"

"Or a Paris departure," said Letord, looking over Tommy's shoulder. "I could put a man on to ringing up the various terminals in Paris to inquire."

"Remembering again that our nearest friend, Beppo, de Chiro, said that the people who are somewhere in the Midi—he mentioned Dijon—once might be with the Lyon station, don't you think?"

"I might even start with that one myself," said Lescord, returning to his desk and his telephone.

"Just a moment. I'm doing some arithmetic. Fifteen-forty-one from 1929 is four hours, no, three hours 44 minutes. A place about three and three-quarter hours from Paris to which these train times apply one way or the other—"

"Give me your notes," said Lescord, and applied himself to the telephone. How long they stay in the Passage Stinville? I've been avoiding the place."

"Ah, yes. Your tall friend with the best nose, he was still in that cellar when my man got there; half an hour later he came out and went along to the Caneton d'Or as you said he might. The man he met there had two beautiful black eyes, again as you said. They sat together and engaged in conversation for some time returning to the house in the yard. Still later that night Magid went in and Michel came out, he went home to bed, he has a room nearby. He appeared to have toothache, he was holding his jaw. Early next morning, he went back again to the yard and this time he was pushing a truck." Lescord paused. "You wish for all these details?"

"Every single little tiny one."

"Very well. Nothing more happened until evening; after dark, when the three men came into the yard together, rolling a large sack which seemed to be heavy, for they had to make a struggle getting it up on the truck. My men followed them for a long, very long, walk right down to the Seine quays, the Quai de Bercy, along there somewhere. They went down an alley between two streets. My men could not follow because the tall man hung back, but Magid and Michel came back a few minutes later with the truck empty. They will get back."

The telephone rang and Lescord answered it. "A thousand thanks," he said finally. "I am most grateful." He replaced the receiver. "The man in the 1541 from Beauséjour to Paris when it arrives at 1929 if it is punctual. My friend, you were inspired."

"I have my moments," said Tommy modestly. "Beauséjour, eh? Now if the tall man with the unlucky nose can be traced to Beauséjour or thereabouts, we shall really be getting somewhere. What is his name?"

"We shall find that today," said Lescord. "The hotel will tell us. Now will you tell me, if indeed you know, was in that barrel and what did they do with it? For my two men had to follow those men when they parted and, later on, the barrel was not to be found."

"It's in the Seine," said Hambleton. "I suppose you could fish it out but I don't know that there would be much point in that, it's quick-hardening cement and it's had—what—36 hours now to set. I didn't give you all the details the other night, but you see, they think I'm inside the cement."

"Hambleton—I take it you're a chemist?"

"Oh, no. Gaston is inside, the man that checked coal belonged to. He was a murderous little herring who never stopped talking, and he was getting it ready for me. So I altered the arrangement. Don't look so horrified, Lescord. Think of all the trouble I've saved you."

#### CHAPTER IV

"BUT," said Lescord, "quite apart from other irregularities, won't these people miss their Gaston?"

"Dear me, no, they think he's run away. You see, there's no doubt I had some luck. Beauséjour, who came into the cellar when I was parking Gaston, didn't know Gaston or, of course, me. He kindly lent a hand with the final stages but he was very cross about it. I was to have been kept alive to answer questions, of course, and he kept on telling me what would happen to me when Monsieur le chef heard of the day before yesterday. So, naturally, I ran away. What do you mean by 'other irregularities'? It would have been far more irregular if I had been in that barrel instead of Gaston."

"You shall identify him for me in our Rogues' Gallery and we will mark him off deceased."

"Splendid. 'So perish all traitors.' Well, I think that's all for the present. I am now going back to Karrooi's to ingratiate myself with my roommate, Daniel Dinel. He is a strong musician as a rule but not at the moment, because he had to pawn his accordion to buy food. He was hungry."

"Homeward Victor Dinel was a tall and stout man of considerable age. He was normally cheerful and even-tempered, and Hambleton rarely liked him."

Hambleton came up the worn stone stairs to their room and found him sitting on the edge of his bed looking at a new pair of boots into his ancient boots. Dinel looked up, nodded and went on with his task. Hambleton sat down on the other bed, produced some pieces of bread and slices of cooked ham—not wrapped in paper—out of his coat pocket and began to eat slowly.

"Have you had a good day?" asked Dinel.

"Not bad. And you?"

"I was lucky enough to find these boot-laces. How greatly it improves the look of one's boots, a good pair of laces." He kept on glancing at Hambleton's food as he talked, and Tommy nodded.

"I managed to get this," he said. "Will you care to share it?"

"I'm sharing the meal tonight."

"Tomorrow," said Dinel. "I must take steps to be in funds again. It is annoying to have no money. Humiliating, also."

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of the star they were was a safe, and a horrible possibility occurred to him. He went inside the archway to see, if he could, where Dinel had gone; at the moment there was no sign of him but quite suddenly there was a yell and a rush and Dinel came tearing out with a gun in his hand, followed by a cook and two scullions, shouting.

"Run," said Dinel, brandishing the bottle. "Run!" Hambleton turned and fled beside him, they ran out of the archway and straight into the arms of two policemen who enfolded them and held them tight. They were arrested, charged with theft, marched off to the nearest police station, searched and pushed into a cell.

In the morning they were roused early, given coffee of a sort and stale rolls, and told that they would be taken before the French equivalent of a magistrate's court at 9.

They were led out at the appointed time and pushed into one of the small blue vans in which the police of Paris convey their captives from place to place. For some reason the driver was in a hurry, he turned corners with a verve which shot the prisoners off the longitudinal benches on to the floor time and again.

In the front of the police wagon, asked Hambleton on the fourth occasion, "or are we in a fire engine by mistake?"

"He is training to become a taxi driver," said Dinel gloomily, and at that moment it happened. The driver came up much too fast to a crossroads controlled by lights. At the last moment the light turned red and he jammed his brakes hard on. Hambleton and Dinel shot the length of the van to bump into the partition behind the driver and a vegetable lorry too close behind rammed the van in the back.

Dinel immediately threw himself down on the floor and groaned loudly, clapping himself around the ribs.

"Are you hurt?" asked Hambleton anxiously, and banged on the panels for attention.

"Not really, but if we can make a fuss we'll be taken to hospital for a bit, anyway. More comfortable than the cells. Groan, can't you?"

By now it was a time a quite large crowd had naturally gathered, and as is normal in France, its sympathies were divided between the disputants. Hambleton and Dinel, lying screened from view and forgotten by the onlookers, left gasping.

Hambleton did Dinel in the ribs.

"Come on," he said, "now's our chance. Run!"

"Not run," said Dinel, getting to his feet. "It attracts attention. Stay aside away."

So they vanished around the nearest corner and when the ambulance arrived it found no patients to succor.

Dinel took Hambleton to another doo-house he knew, compared with which Karrooi's was practically the Ritz. Hambleton viewed it with distaste, scratched himself in intelligent anticipation and led Dinel aside.

"Listen. You'll have to lie low for a few days because the police know it, they saw your papers. I can go out in safety, it is only to keep out of the area, away from them. The crooks will find."

"That is true. But we must have money, they took it all from us."

"I can get some—"

"Be careful!"

"It is quite safe."

Dinel nodded and went indoors while Hambleton took a devious route to the Quai des Orfèvres and Assise Letard.

#### CHAPTER V

"I AM getting inside the skin of my part, as they say. When I turned in here and one of your men looked at me I nearly died."

"Would it," said Lescord, turning a chair around for Hambleton, getting him a drink and offering cigarettes in one smooth flow of uninterrupted movement, "would it be your conscience catching up with you at last?"

"Conscience?" asked Hambleton, genuinely surprised. "Oh, you mean Gaston, do you? That wasn't murder, that was merely self-extinction. I would it," said Lescord, turning a chair around for Hambleton, getting him a drink and offering cigarettes in one smooth flow of uninterrupted movement, "would it be your conscience catching up with you at last?"

"According to the hotel register his name is Jean Artaux of Paris and the rest of his particulars are false. On the day of the day before yesterday—you were there in the morning—Artaux left

de Gare de Lyon by the 1335. He did not buy a ticket though he showed up at the barrier, therefore had a return bill. He went to Dijon.

"Oh. Not on to Besine by any chance?"

"That train goes no farther than Dijon."

"I see. And the name Alexandre?"

"Is probably as false as all the rest of his particulars. We have nothing against that name in Records."

"So I supposed," said Hambleton. "Never mind, we now have two indications pointing the same way—Magid's note of a train time from Besine and this fellow going to Dijon. Has anybody seen Magid that last couple of days?" Letord shook his head. "Perhaps he's gone down there."

"It may be so. And now would you care to tell me why you are burdening yourself with the company of such as Victor Dinet? Thief, beggar, pick-pocket, idler."

"He is my ally and my guarantee, my shield and my background. He is the man who tells all his friends that old Tictoc is all right—"

"Tictoc?"

"I have a watch," said Hambleton, displaying it. "It is true that it does not go but, if you wind it up, it ticks, later."

"Formidable," said Letord.

"I bought it in a junk shop for 60 francs but Dinet doesn't know that. I said I had inherited it from my distinguished father, the late M. Schem. It is the last despairing remnant of my family fortunes. Dinet thinks I am an expert at snatching food off market stalls, which reminds me of a chicken I left at Kistoff's last night and I haven't go back for it, and now I am on the run from the police. Can you lend me some money, Letord?"

"I have some money here which belongs to you," said Letord. "Also I have a few francs and other possessions from your hotel; if you remember, you asked me last time you were here to collect them for you. Of course, if you have not enough money for your outfit, I think I could manage 500 francs with an effort."

"Letord, stop. Something rather odd is happening to me. When you said that about 500 francs suddenly as it were rained up before me like an enormous pile of money. One can live for a week on 500 francs, do you know that?"

"Live?"

"Well, continue to exist. However, let us not get morbid. Letord, will you have the infinite good news to warn the police of Dijon and Besine that the battered old tramp Tictoc is not what he seems but very otherwise? They will please not to take the slightest interest in me unless I approach them, probably in some rude and uncultured manner. I might want to get in touch with you."

"Certainly I will do that. You are going down there at once, are you?"

"I am wandering down that way with my good comrade Dinet. By the time we have been a few days on the road and I have grown some more whiskers, I don't think that even Magid or Michel—if he goes there, too—will recognize me."

\* \* \*

Hambleton and the man Victor Dinet travelled from Paris in a lorry belonging to a friend of Dinet's who was driving to Chartres to pick up a load of scrap-iron.

They walked from Chartres and came to Dijon in the evening of the third day. By this time Hambleton's money was practically gone.

"We are penniless," he said. "Something must be done about it."

"For tonight," said Dinet, "we need not be concerned. I have a friend, a good old friend of many years, and he keeps an eating place in the next street."

He turned off the main road by which they had entered the town and walked by a series of alleys to a narrow street behind the markets. Here they entered what Hambleton privately considered to be one of the grubbiest cafes he had ever encountered, but there were compensations. A large man in a grimy apron came forward, stared at Dinet, uttered a yell of delight and rushed to meet him. The next moment the two brothers were warmly embracing.

"But it is years—"

"Too many years. How goes it with you?"

"And with you? Come in, sit down, a little glass of something—"

"I have a friend," said Dinet, and introduced Hambleton. "We call him Tictoc—he is pleasantly easy to remember."

"Enchanté, Monsieur Tictoc. Come in, please."

Hambleton went in and sat in a corner while Dinet and Alexandre talked and across.

"During the war, Alexandre and I shared together an active dislike for Germans. Alexandre, however, married a wife who kept him under such firm control that he is now the proud proprietor of a cafe. I, on the other hand, maintained my personal freedom."

Alexandre returned with a skinny, angular woman whom he introduced as his wife to—"Two friends of mine, my love," he said. "Monsieur Victor Dinet and Monsieur Tictoc. They are staying here."

"That night," indeed? Then they must smarten themselves up a little. As they are, they will lower the tone of the place."

Thoroughly washed and superficially tidied, they stayed on at the Chien Enchaîne for two or three days, which they spent strolling about the town. Madame Alexandre had one good trait, her cooking was surprisingly good, and, when Alexandre was in charge of the bar, wine could be had on credit. This was not so when Madame presided.

"Madame," said Dinet gleefully, "has not the golden heart of my old friend Alexandre?"

"Yes," said Hambleton, "she is. She was spending his time looking out for any member of the d'Alroy Circus whom he had seen before but so far entirely without success."

"That night they went to bed early since Madame was in charge of the bar and they had no money left to buy wine elsewhere. The moment Dinet was asleep—he had an enviable gift of falling asleep at any time when there was nothing else to do—Hambleton slipped out quietly into the town and spent his last few francs telephoning to the Prefecture de Police to make an appointment with the chief, the evening of the next day. With relief that the police had heard about him from Letord, that they were prepared to help him in any way necessary in dealing with the d'Alroy Circus, if only he, the chief, would be happy to do so, the distinguished Monsieur Hambleton at once, if he would give himself the trouble of coming to the Prefecture.

"We are most courteous," said Hambleton. "I come at once."

But Letord had omitted to tell them that the so-distinguished Monsieur Hambleton looked, at the moment, more like an animated scarecrow than a reputable member of British Intelligence, and he had some difficulty in gaining admission. He slipped quickly and unobtrusively through the main entrance and was scooped by a young constable immediately inside.

"Here! What do you want?"

"My name is Hambleton and I have an appointment with Monsieur le Chef de Police."

"I dare say, and when he wants you we come and fetch you. Now run away."

Hambleton drew himself up and looked the man straight in the eyes for a full five seconds.

"Now," he said icily, "send someone up to your chief to tell him that the messenger from Monsieur Letord of the Surete is waiting to see him. Don't be fool, man, go."

The young constable hesitated, turned away and called out a sergeant, who had heard that Hambleton was expected. Five minutes later he was sitting in the room telling his story.

"I have, of course, heard of the d'Alroy Circus," said the chief, when the tale was done, "though I should be very surprised to find that they had established themselves anywhere in France. For in our country districts of France, monsieur, the inhabitants do not move about as men do in towns, and this is particularly true of the wine-growing districts where the vineyards are the basis of life rather than of the vine, generation after generation. We all know each other, monsieur, especially persons of position and distinction, and I do not think this large organization could run by levers and pulleys."

"No," said Hambleton, "No. I see your point. If these people are here, their cover must be superb. If I am wrong, I go away empty, that is all."

"And in the meantime, 'how can I help you?'"

"I should allow me to trouble you for a little drink and those to which we may recognize each other."

"That shall be done. There are some here tonight. I will call them up. Anything else?"

"If I should want to see you again? I cannot be seen strutting in here, it would be most unwise."

"If monsieur would appear to be a little drunk and have an altercation with one of my uniformed

men, he would soon find himself being conducted to the prison."

"To spend a night in the cells?"

The chief smiled slowly. "That might happen. Yes, I will give you a card to show in case of emergency. He scribbled a note upon one of his cards. "Hide that away where even your strange companions will not find it. Anything else?"

"Did Monsieur Letord send down any money for me?"

"He arranged a credit upon which you can draw, yes. How much would you like?"

"Not too much," laughed Hambleton. "I don't want my friend Dinet to think that I have robbed a bank."

Hambleton made the acquaintance of six or eight men whose faces he memorized, after which he was let out of the Prefecture by a side door where there was no one in the street. He went back to the Chien Enchaîne and padded silently up the outside stair to the room he shared with Dinet, who promptly woke up.

"Who is that?"

"Only Tictoc. It's all right. I have been out for a little while."

Dinet drew himself on one elbow. The light from a street lamp outside the window showed him Hambleton sitting on the edge of his bed counting money. "I have been lucky," he explained. "When I was walking along I found this which someone had dropped."

"I do not quite like this," Dinet said. "What else could we do?"

"It is the season of the wine harvest," said Dinet. "We might get a few days' work in the vineyards. They pay a little and they give one food and wine. You suggested it yourself, I remember correctly."

"So I did, yes."

"I would not mind doing a few days' work for food with wine," said Dinet thoughtfully, and went to sleep again.

"Well, if you know about that?" said Hambleton to himself, and followed Dinet's example.

On the following day they endeavored themselves to Madame by paying for all they had had since they came to Dijon.

Later that day the two companions, tired of strolling about, dropped into a cafe for a glass of wine and a rest. Hambleton provided also a packet of cigarettes. They were sitting in a room where they would be in no one's way and sat there watching the people pass by in the street outside. Presently three men came in together and sat down at a table some distance away. A moment later he uttered a surprised exclamation but did not alter, but his heart was singing a happy little song. At last, at last, and he had not been wasting his time in Burgundy, for one of them was the tall, thin man with a crooked nose who had helped him to push Gaston into a barrel of wet cement in a cellar in Paris. The man had called himself Jean Artaxus at the hotel where he had stayed in Paris, but whether or not that name served him here was quite another matter.

The three men did not appear to be upon intimate terms for the other two called Artaxus "monieur." Hambleton listened intently and soon realized that this meeting was for business only. Then he noticed Artaxus looking at his watch.

Hambleton rose and went to the door. A moment later he uttered a surprised exclamation as an old man passed the window.

"Was that—it can't be! One moment." He laid his hand on Dinet's arm and rose to his feet. "Excuse me, I thought I knew that man—wait here for me, I will come back."

"I am quite happy here," said Dinet contentedly. Hambleton, however, was sitting at the back behind Artaxus's chair, but none of the men looked up.

"It is a Hi-Fi receiver, almost new," said one of them. "Were it not that the case is scratched—"

Hambleton turned and ran for his life. He was the way to the station and it might be that Artaxus was watching the time because he had a train to catch. When Artaxus came out a few minutes later, the shabby, shivering man, who had been looking at cooked food in a shop window, Artaxus passed the figure took its head and wandered after him.

Half way down the Rue de la Liberte, Hambleton had made up his mind. One of the plainclothesmen who had been introduced to him the night before was standing in a doorway, apparently wrapped in thought. Hambleton, with a cigarette between his fingers, slipped up to him. A moment later he was fairly, madly

"Oh, I should think so," said the detective, and whisked off a lighter.

"That tall, thin man I was following, he has a bent nose," said Hambleton, stooping toward the flame. "I want to know where he goes, if you please. Thank you, monsieur," he added in a louder voice, and stepped back.

"You're welcome," said the detective, and walked off after Artaxus while Hambleton returned to Diné. Much later, when they were making their leisurely way back to the Chien Enchaîne for their evening meal, a young man in plain clothes brushed past Hambleton, leaving a slip of paper in his pocket. On it was written:

"Went by train to Beaune but we lost him outside the station. We do not know him."

"You were speaking yesterday," said Hambleton, "of getting work in the vineyards. How good this report is!"

"Yes, indeed. Alexandre is fortunate in some respects."

"In a very important respect."

"You are right. I made a few inquiries this morning, the vendange is beginning already."

"In Beaune?"

"In Beaune, yes. You like Beaune?"

"I like its products," laughed Hambleton. "I am a stranger to the town itself but it would seem a good place in which to find a vineyard."

"A vineyard? The vineyard is all vineyards. Should we, then, move on there?"

"Tomorrow, perhaps?"

"Tomorrow, certainly," agreed Diné. "We have, I feel, seen Dypen."

#### CHAPTER VI

BEAUNE is a charming town of immense age. Julius Caesar captured there 40 years before Christ was born in Bethlehem. Beaune is normally a quiet, sleepy place, but not at the time of the vendange, the wine harvest, when there are vineyards upon all the sunny open slopes and in every one of them people will be laboring, men and women, young and old and even children big enough to have a sense of responsibility.

For the first day or so, until his back was used to stooping, Hambleton thought that the work would kill him. Diné had done it before and stood up to it better. There was a way to it, he said, one learned by experience.

The town was full. Diné and Hambleton were allowed to sleep in a one-roomed cottage, empty because the windows were out and the roof leaked when it rained, but there was a fireplace with a chimney so that they could cook for themselves if they wished, and they lay upon sacks stuffed with hay in the flickering light of a wood fire.

It was the month of September and the evenings were drawing in so that the day's work ended fairly early. Hambleton was so tired on the first two evenings that he almost forgot why he was there, but on the third day, as they were cutting close to the road, a man came walking past without even looking at them and Hambleton saw him plainly. A tall, thin man with colorless hair and skin and oddly wide jawbones: Louis Magid, the killer.

When they had finished work for that evening they went back to the cottage, boiled water and washed luxuriously in a bucket of water from the fire. They combed their respective hair, brushed each other's coats and went out together looking positively dignified. The vineyard where they worked was a little outside the town and they walked along the road which led to it. On their left, the land rose sharply and the hillside was terraced for vines, near the top of the ridge an ancient stone chateau looked down from among trees and a rutted lane curved up from the road through the vineyards and vanished behind the house.

"That is a pretty place," said Hambleton. "The view from it must be charming."

"It is sadly neglected," said Diné severely. "Those windows have not been cleaned this year and some of them are broken. But it is a nice place, as you say. Not too far."

"I suppose these vineyards around it belong to the house."

"No doubt. Now, they are very well kept whereas the house is shabby. I assume that they are let or sold." Near the gate and facing the road was an inn bearing the sign of the Happy Traveller. Diné stopped and looked at it.

"Why should we walk farther?"

An hour later, having diné, they were sitting at a table outside under the orchard trees, leisurely finishing a bottle of wine. The Happy Traveller had a good deal more custom than one might expect, it seemed that people strolled out from the town to eat on the terrace or drink a glass of wine as they strolled home again to bed, but Hambleton looked in vain for a face he knew.

Presently a man wandered out of the cafe with a bottle of red brandy and a glass in the other. He was plainly not very steady on his feet and it was more than probable that he had been encouraged to sit outside. Parties sitting around tables looked over their shoulders and closed up together as he approached, since it was evident that he wanted company and not to sit alone. Eventually he arrived at Hambleton's table.

"Don't mind if I sit here, do you? Room for a little one, eh?"

"For the short time we shall be here," said Diné coldly, "you are welcome."

"Thank you. Have a drink? Oh, you've got some; that's right." He put his glass down on the table and filled it from his bottle. "Not much left in here, is there? Never mind. Can always buy another if I like. Plenty of money."

"How nice," said Hambleton.

"Yes, isn't it? You got plenty of money, too?"

"We work for what we need," said Diné with simple pride. He was, in fact, so pulled up by receiving, for once, money which he had honestly earned that he had to tell everyone about it.

The man emptied his glass, refilled it and drank the contents. He then leaned forward across the table, breathing vivaciously into their faces, and spoke confidentially.

"I get money from a doctor," he whispered.

"Yes, but he's well useful, Dr. Picot. You wouldn't know him. Lots of money—"

"Excuse us," said Diné, rising. "It is time we retired."

"It is, indeed, getting late," said Hambleton, also getting up, "and we are weary. We will wish you good-night, monsieur."

"You run along," said the man in an offended voice, "and don't come."

They walked away and left him.

A few nights later Hambleton and Diné sat in their hut having supper; that is, they were making coffee and eating slices of bread and butter, the meat paste by which Burgundy sets much store.

Hambleton rose to his feet and shook himself.

"Let us go down to the Happy Traveller and have a glass of brandy and a little more of the meat paste."

"We have enough money if we do not have too many and it will settle our stomachs for the night."

A quarter of an hour later they were in the bar of the Happy Traveller, each with a small glass of cognac. There were several people in the bar and more sitting at the tables outside, but the place was by no means full and it was very quiet.

Presley the door opened and two men came in together. One was the man who had been so drunk there before and the man with him was Louis Magid. Hambleton turned away from them and Diné looked on him at the moment.

"That man again!" he said. "I hope that he won't persist in our tonight."

"Tonight he has a friend with him," said Hambleton.

"And once again he has had a drink too many. If he speaks to us tonight I shall walk out."

"Why?" asked Hambleton curiously. "He is no worse than many others we meet who drink a little too much, a bore indeed, but I have seen him."

"That may be, but he makes my spine creep."

Hambleton thought that if the sight of Magid made one's spine creep, it would be less surprising that he did not say so. Diné finished his cognac and pushed the glass away.

"I shall go back. I do not care for it here with that man in the room. Do not hurry yourself for me."

"I may perhaps go for a short walk before I turn in. I will try not to disturb you."

Diné nodded and went out. Hambleton finished his drink, and the proprietor and went on his turn but not back to the cottage. He was anxious to see where Magid went, with or without his innumerable companions, and the layout of the Happy Traveller made it easy to watch him. It stood close to the road with a terrace in front, there was a narrow drive around one side of the house to a car park at the back. The whole property was enclosed by the dry-stone wall of the vineyard

running from the road around to the road again like a capital D laid upon its upright. There was no way out but by the entrance on the road though no doubt a man could climb that dry-stone wall if he had a mind for stumbling up a steep hill between the rows of vines.

Hambleton found himself a quiet nook from which he could watch front and back at once and settled down to wait.

Time passed, customers left and no more came, the car park emptied and the moon rose in the sky with her accustomed serenity, but there was no sign of Magid and his companion.

"Where are the fellows?" Hambleton, very odd. Magid and associates must be staying there. I suppose there are rooms to let, but why didn't I see an upstairs light go on? It doesn't matter, I only wanted to know where Magid stays in Beaune and it would seem that I have found it."

He slipped out of his retreat and went back to the cottage where Diné should have been sound asleep long before, but there was a light showing in the window. Diné must have dropped asleep with the candle alight. Hambleton opened the door without noise and stepped into the room. Diné was crouching by the fire thoughtfully plucking a chicken.

"Hello," said Hambleton.

Diné started so violently that he all but dropped the carcass into the fire and the gasp he gave was almost a yelp.

"Died! How you frightened me! I didn't hear a sound."

"I thought you might be asleep. Why, what's the matter?" Diné had struggled to his feet, taken their reserve bottle of wine from its place of concealment and was drinking from it in long gulps.

"Aren't you well?"

"I've seen something horrible. You know that man who was so drunk? Yes, well, he's dead!"

"Dead?" said Hambleton.

"Shut up, I said. Well, not quite. I heard it, and then that man who was with him carried out the body slung over his shoulder like a sack of coal."

"Down again by the fire. Diné. You are shivering. Now tell me all about it, when and where did all this happen?"

"Up at that chateau above the vineyards, above the Happy Traveller. You know the place. Why are you looking at me like that? When I left you I went up the road a little and then turned up the hillside between the rows of vines. I saw a chicken."

"A chicken? In the vineyard? On the side of the house but there's nothing there now except these hens and a pig or two in a sty. The hens never strayed a feather, so I squatted down on the next bench and ran my fingers down the birds' legs very lightly, feeling for the one with the smoothest legs. The youngest, you know. This is the one. I poked her out, took her off the perch and wrung her neck and she was one of those so much as cheered. Good, that."

"Very good indeed. I couldn't do that."

"I will show you how some day. It is easy when you know how. When I closed her up in my inside coat pocket, opened the hothouse door again and stuck my head out. Almost I fell down flat, for all the ground-floor windows looked on the road and I was standing up, people moving about, I could see their shadows, only 10 metres away—less than that."

"Did you?"

"Before I could do anything at all there was a shoe first inside the house, so I took my head back again among the hens. I kept the door open a slit and peered out, and just at that moment someone opened the door and I saw a man and not the boy or what that was. Then there was a few minutes' wait, it seemed a long time, just long enough for me to ask myself whether this was my chance to go away, when a man came out of the open door with the corpse slung over his shoulder, as I said. Tic-tac, he came straight toward me!"

Hambleton threw some more wood on the fire and the flames made a warm glow cheerful for him. "Just beyond the hen-run there is a well with a hinged lid that that man went to the well and tried to lift the lid but it would not lift and I heard a sadistic rattle. That man swore. I heard him, then there was a pause, and then I saw a man without the body. I heard him call to someone, 'Where the hell is the key?' I saw him enter the house and, Tic-tac, I could not stay there any longer, I slipped out of the henhouse and ran for it. Only,



when I pushed the corpse lying by the wall I bent down and looked at its face. It was the man who was drunk."

Humbledon stared unwearyingly into the fire, for he was trying to puzzle out how those two men could have reached the house so quickly when he himself had the best of reasons for knowing that they had not left the Happy Traveller.

"We cannot put the police on him," said Dinel, fidgeting. "If that is the case, so quickly when he himself had the best of reasons for knowing that they had not left the Happy Traveller."

"The man to whom you took such a marked dislike, Why? Did you ever hear of doing. How could I explain away what I was doing there? Besides, the man he killed was no less."

"The man to whom you took such a marked dislike, Why? Did you ever hear of doing. How could I explain away what I was doing there? Besides, the man he killed was no less."

"Nothing, not even his name, but I knew quite a lot about someone he used to know. He mentioned a name that night when he talked to us, if you remember. A Dr. Petit."

"Petit? It does ring a faint bell—who was he?"

"It is easily seen that you were not in Paris during the war? Monsieur le Docteur de Médecine Petit had a surgery in the Rue Caumartin and a nursing home at the corner of the Avenue Foch and the Rue Leveau. You will understand that during the German occupation there were many people who thought it advisable to leave France with all the valuables they could carry with them. Petit undertook to help them to get away. In a sense, of course, he did. He killed them, it is thought, with a gas, and then he burned the bodies in two incinerators and dropped the remains into a pit of quicklime, all this in his nursing home in the Avenue Foch. Whenever I hear the name Petit I do not like, I dislike."

"But," began Humbledon.

"No buts about it. It was clever, you know. Petit charged highly for 'arranging these escapes,' money down in advance, naturally. These people came to his house with suitcases containing all they had of money, jewelry, valuables, to take with them, of course. When they disappeared and no more was heard from them, Petit came back, of course, they would not write, it wouldn't be safe."

"I remember now. He made a dramatic escape, did he not, he?"

"There were complaints about black, greasy smoke, the neighbors rang up the police, the fire brigade—they all came and broke in since there was no one in the house. Fugue to yourself what they found. One of them rang up the surgery in the Rue Caumartin and asked Petit to come back to the nursing home. He came, Tictoc, on a bicycle, to find a gendarme outside his house of whom he asks what is all the trouble, and the gendarme says it is 27 corpses, that is, the trouble, so Dr. Petit rides away again on his bicycle and nobody sees him any more for eight months. Suddenly, in November of that year, 1944, someone who knew Petit saw him at a Metro station in Paris and he was arrested."

"Still in Paris?" said Humbledon, "or perhaps again in Paris? He must have been mad, hundreds of people knew him."

"He was in uniform, calling himself Captain something—Capt. Valery of the Maquis. He did not appear anxious, he said that he had killed 63 people, not 27, and that he was a member of the Gestapo or traitors or betrayers of Frenchmen to the Gestapo. Since some of his victims were elderly Jews and some were children, he was not believed."

"I take it that he was convicted?"

"Oh, yes," said Dinel casually, "and destroyed like the monster he was, but that was not much use, was it? It did not bring these poor people back. To turn to another aspect. Petit could not, of course, have done all the single-handed thing he had had helpers. I wonder whether they are all dead, too. I doubt it, don't you?"

"That man who died tonight?"

"Not quite. He said he knew Petit, did he not, and that though he was dead, he still was useful as a source of money. You think blackmail, Tictoc? I say blackmail also. That drunkard may not have been associated with Petit but he knows someone who did. Knew, I should say, since he is dead and settling down comfortably at the bottom of that friend Magid?"

"Nineteen forty-four at latest for Petit," said Humbledon thoughtfully. "Fourteen years ago now. Magid is not much over 30, and he is a Marseillais, so I doubt his having been in Paris helping Petit at the age of 16. Not that he is morally incapable—"

"Then he was helping someone else tonight, someone who knew Petit?"

On the following evening Dinel said that he was going to apply himself to cooking the chicken, a matter which required the utmost concentration. Humbledon, who had an errand to run, said that he definitely did not want Dinel's company, said that he would take himself out of the way for an hour.

There were several people in the police station of Dijon that night, sitting upon various errands; both they and the sergeant-in-charge looked around in surprise when a grubby figure in shabby clothes walked into the room and waited patiently for attention.

Eventually the sergeant called him up.

"You there? What do you want?"

Humbledon came to the desk and said politely that he had called in to report that he had seen a waiter. The sergeant's eyebrows went up, but even the most unlikely people can and do own walls.

"Full particulars, please," he said, and drew a form toward him. Humbledon leaned on the desk and pushed across it the card which the chief of police at Dijon had given to him.

"It's all there," he said.

The sergeant put it up and his eyebrows went up a good deal farther than before. He looked at it carefully upon both sides and then rose suddenly to his feet.

"Wait here," he said, and walked through a door behind him which he closed firmly after himself.

A few minutes later he returned, opened the flap of the desk which separated him from his customers, and came through to lay an official hand on Humbledon's shoulder.

"You come with me."

Humbledon went meekly, followed by sympathizers from the other side of the door.

When he was shown into the office, the chief of police rose from behind the desk to greet him.

"This is an honor, Monsieur Humbledon. We have been expecting you ever since my friend the chief of police at Dijon telephoned to tell me about you. In fact, he was here this afternoon, but he had asked about you we had to admit that we had not heard anything of you. He was not even certain that you were still here."

"Yes," said Humbledon, "thank you. I am still here, as you see, probably to your honor."

"I am glad to help you in any possible way."

"I think, in only one way at the moment and that is a piece of local information. The chateau on the hillside above the inn called the Happy Traveller."

"The Chateau des Colônes, monsieur?"

"I believe that is its name, yes. There are vineyards between the house and the road."

At one time the vineyards were cultivated by the family Tabarot who own the chateau but now they are leased to a wine-grower who owns other vineyards in this district. Mademoiselle Tabarot could not be expected to manage them herself.

"Would you tell me, monsieur," said Humbledon, "all that you know about that house? Who lives there, is it let to tenants, have they lived there long?"

The chief of police looked a little shocked.

"The family Tabarot," he said, "have lived at the Chateau des Colônes for several generations, they have always been respected. Mademoiselle Tabarot lived in Paris during the war and her brother Lucien disappeared, as too often happened. I understand that he was a little simple, not mad, not an idiot by any means, but merely what is called a little young man."

The Tabarot family moved to Paris to live so that he could have the best education suited to his needs. At that time and for some years the chateau was let, but not here. After the war, when Mademoiselle Tabarot was left alone, she came back from Paris to live here. She lives very retired with one woman in the house and a man about the place. Mademoiselle is not rich, you understand, nor is she very young now. She has had a husband."

"You are absolutely certain of all this, Monsieur le Chef?"

"But, certainly, monsieur. Not of my personal knowledge, but the family are well known locally."

Humbledon went back to the hut to find it full of the savory smell of roast chicken, but for the moment he disregarded this.

"I am now thinking, Dinel," he said. "That corpse down the well—"

Dinel became suddenly so angry with his teeth chattered.

"It is that you must introduce a subject like

that when I am about to serve up this exquisite bird! Have you no decorum, no palate, no discretion, no soul?"

Humbledon apologized. "I only thought that if the people at the chateau use that well—"

"They do not. They have been told that upon the opposite side of the road to the Happy Traveller. They have not used that well for 20 years."

On the following day the group of laborers which Humbledon and Dinel addressed found itself transferred to another vineyard, that upon the opposite side of the road to the Happy Traveller. They had only to lift their eyes to see, on a shelf of the hillside above it, the Chateau des Colônes with its dirty yellow walls snuffing up through the vineyard. A little before midday the workers gathered together for the midday meal; food which they had themselves brought, and wine provided by the management.

They were sitting quite near the road making remarks about the passersby and exchanging local gossip to which Humbledon and Dinel, being strangers, listened expectantly, silently and heard many strange things. Presently a woman in a dark dress of no particular fashion came walking up the road from the town, followed by a man carrying a suitcase. She was a tall, gawky woman with a long, narrow face and a heavy nose, she was long-legged and walked with a swinging stride which plainly embarrassed the short, fat man with the luggage. She went straight on, turned into the lane leading up to the chateau and strode up the hill with such change of pace while her balen porter lagged yet farther behind.

"Mademoiselle returns home again," said the woman next to Humbledon.

"Mademoiselle?"

"Mademoiselle Tabarot from the chateau up there."

Dinel, who had been staring at her, uttered a sort of grunt, took a long pull at the wine and lay down flat with his arms across his face.

"She is here, you see, just now," said a young girl with her hair tied in a pony-tail. "Today is Friday, yes, I passed her on Wednesday morning going off with her two suitcases to catch the bus."

"Why did women want to meet her two days? She is not the gay type, is she, Monsieur?"

"Who knows what a lady like that will want?"

"Always she does this when she goes away. For a night or two, for a week or more, always the two suitcases."

"Well, it is her business, is it not?"

When the argument came finally to an end and it was time to work again, the man next to Humbledon and Dinel turned their eyes to the grimace and the sunburn his face was rather odd color.

"Are you not feeling well?"

"I'm all right," said Dinel, getting up rather more brightly than usual. "I am perfectly well. A little sleepy for the moment, that is all."

That night in the hut Humbledon stretched and yawned and said that he did not think that he would go to work next morning.

"Why not?" asked Dinel.

"For several reasons. I say: Dinel?"

"Well?"

"For Mademoiselle Tabarot went away on Wednesday morning for two days, she was not at the chateau the night before last."

"No," said Dinel, "no. That is indisputable. Mademoiselle Tabarot was not here."

"But there was someone there besides Magid, was there not? You heard someone speak—"

"No. I heard Magid speak, so presumably he spoke to someone. But I do not see where it was. I kept the keys. But I did not hear anyone answer. Should we now lie down and sleep? It is getting late."

Humbledon agreed. If Dinel did not wish to talk about the Chateau des Colônes there was no point in pursuing the subject. It was possible that, looking back on the chicken-stealing episode, Dinel was more so than the rest of the wine-growers.

The next morning, therefore, they parted as arranged, Dinel to work and Humbledon to Dijon.

Though the journey to Dijon from Besune takes only a little over an hour, Humbledon did not appear to have been suffering from a defect of memory because he forgot at once Dinel's good advice about keeping out of trouble. He went into a cafe for a quartet of wine which is a very modest amount indeed, but seemed to have affected him more than one would expect, for when he came out he was definitely unsteady.

A policeman noticed Humbledon with interest,

since it was early in the day for a man to be as untidy as that.

"Here you," said the policeman, "you'd best go home and sleep it off."

"How dare you!" said the tramp indignantly, and pushed the policeman away. The next afternoon the former was led away by the latter to the Prefecture de Police. The moment they were inside the building—

"Thank you so much," said Hambleton in his normal crisp tones. "Very kindly done."

"It is inadvisable," said the constable coolly, "to be impertinent to the police. Come with me."

He led his captive by the arm into the office of the station sergeant who, fortunately, had met Hambleton when he was there before and even recognized him when he saw him again.

"Ah, monsieur! Good morning. Monsieur wishes to see Monsieur the Chief?"

"If it is possible," said Hambleton.

"I will inquire at once. You, to the constable, return to your duties. You will know this gentleman when you see him again."

"Without doubt," said the constable faintly. The chief of the police was friendly, welcoming and perfectly polite, and his was amusement moving warmly below the surface.

"If you want to laugh heartily at the sight of me," Hambleton, "pray do so. I shall only be flattered. A tribute to my charms, you know."

"But, monsieur, it is magnificent!"

"Thank you. Redolent of the soil, too, I know."

"I hope your inquiries have prospered?"

"I should not presume to use the word, 'prospered.' They are not entirely abortive, that is all, at least I think not but it may be a mare's nest. Would you, monsieur, be so infinitely polite as to allow me to speak to Monsieur the Chief of the Surete? If the call comes from here he can satisfy himself that it is genuine."

"I will put a message through asking him to ring back to this number," said the chief, and did so. "Now, while we are waiting for the call, is there any other way in which I can serve you?"

"I want to go to Paris today, monsieur. Is there any other means besides the train? For I fear that if I were to present myself as one wishing to travel by train I might find myself unseemly."

"It is possible," admitted the chief. "There are, in fact, certain means of transport."

"Of course there are, and I don't want to find myself being dragged off and washed. I have taken a good deal of trouble to acquire this—this paint and I don't want to lose it."

He was interrupted by the telephone.

"Your call," said the chief, and passed the instrument across to Hambleton. "Excuse me a moment. I want to see one of my men." He went out of the room and Hambleton addressed himself to the telephone.

"That you, Leford?" Hambleton bade. Would you do something for me. Very good of you. Would you ring up Forgan and Campbell in London for me, he gave the telephone number of the shop in the Clerkenwell Road, and all them to do about everything. They must get there tonight at latest, that's important. When they arrive in Paris they must find a hotel first and then ring your office to say where they are staying. They must get on today somewhere, Leford. Then I'll ring your office to find where Campbell and Forgan are, and thereafter ring them to give them their instructions. Yes, it's quite simple when you've got it. We work it out. Thank you very much. Au revoir."

The chief of police reassured, saying that he had just had an idea which had, to his surprise, turned out to be a good one. "One of my men has a brother who drives one of those great cars. I thought I heard something about his going to Paris today, with a load of barrels or wine. He goes this afternoon if it would suit you to drive with him. It will be a long, slow run but at least the man is honest and reliable."

Hambleton thought it an excellent idea and said so.

It was a little after midnight when Hambleton came to Paris but not too late to ring up the Surete which knows no closing hour. Monsieur Leford had gone home, yes, but there was a message for Monsieur Hambleton as follows: "His friends are staying at the Hotel Anglo-Américain."

Forgan and Campbell, having newly arrived in Paris were not very likely, to be in bed before midnight.

"Alexander Forgan speaking. Who calls?"

"Hambleton here."

"Well, so I guessed, but wasn't sure whether it would be tactful to mention names. How nice of you to encourage us to come to Paris. How are you?"

"Listen, Forgan. I can't tell you much now, but could you and Campbell meet me in the Flea-Market at 11 tomorrow morning? Good. Do you know the place at all?"

"Never been there but we have heard of it as who has not?"

"Who indeed. Right in the middle of it there's a stall where they sell statuary. There may be more than one stall, but the particular stall I'm describing your attention goes in for what look like bits and pieces of Roman work, most conspicuously a large figure weighing the best part of a ton but without a head. When this you see, look out for me."

William Forgan and Alexander Campbell were engineers who had spent some years keeping the wheels of industry turning on a ranch in the Argentine. When they retired from that employment they came back to London and together opened a small shop in the Clerkenwell Road where they sell models of locomotives, yachts, speedboats, airplanes, traction engines and practically every looking model which moves on land, sea, and in the air. Forgan and Campbell were old friends of Hambleton's and had helped him upon several occasions in the past, though their unorthodox methods had failed to outlast them to Letord.

## CHAPTER VII

THE famous Flea-Market of Paris started many years ago as a few stalls selling old clothes—hence its name—but it has since developed into a piece of waste ground where has developed into a large market for second-hand goods of all descriptions including pictures, miniatures, furniture and antiques of all kinds, some of them of great value and some of them of no value.

Forgan and Campbell passed through the outer ring where are sold new goods of the shoddiest kind and found themselves faced with a choice of wares which, really, defied the beginner's detection. They found several stalls which sold statuary, if that is the correct inclusive term for wooden figures of saints with chipped halos, reclining forms of elegant young women in alabaster and gilt, busts and figures of alleged bronzes of small boys selling pig-newspapers, china shepherdesses who had lost their sheep and china lovers who had lost their arms, but of the large figure of a possibly Roman personage without his head there was no sign.

"Can it be that we have overlooked it?" asked Forgan.

They turned back and thereby came face-to-face with a slightly desalted figure in a ragged coat, dishevelled whiskers and a perfectly horrible hat who was moaning round the stalls muttering to himself. He stopped in front of Forgan and asked in a quavering voice if Forgan had the piece of a meal. Forgan sidestepped him but the old man still followed, muttering that he was hungry, and Campbell put his hand in his pocket for a 20-franc piece, which, however, was caught, caught and disappeared. "They charge 6,000 francs at the Tour d'Argent."

"There are other establishments," said Campbell reassuringly.

"Oh, come on, Campbell," said Forgan in English. "Don't encourage the old hoober or he'll hang round us for ever, and when we do meet Hambleton—"

"You have," said the old hoober in English better than theirs. "Don't stand there gaping. Stroll on, I follow."

"The old maestro in person," murmured Campbell, and they strolled on, stopping frequently to admire the treasures laid out before them while Hambleton wandered vaguely, sometimes behind them and sometimes in front, muttering all the time. "It's the *l'Alone Circus*," said he, and he said something about them before I came away. There's a perfectly horrible restaurant just outside here but at least they won't mind my going in, so if you'll follow me—"

Hambleton drifted away.

The restaurant was quite repellent and kept by a cross-eyed man of sinister aspect, but Hambleton entered without hesitation with Forgan and Campbell behind him. He led the way into a small room at the back and the proprietor came in with a

bottle of wine for which Campbell paid. Hambleton nodded to the cross-eyed man who nodded back and went out, shutting the door after him.

"Well now," said Hambleton. "In the first place, thank you for coming. I'm very glad to see you. We are very happy to be here," said Campbell politely. He looked around the dingy room which smelled of mice and sour wine and added: "I mean, in Paris and in your company."

"I have come here from Beauvais," said Hambleton, "and I'm going back there. I have got a job in a vineyard, picking grapes. It is the season of the wine harvest."

"I visited Paris, Forgan."

"When I first came to Paris I was able to observe some of the *d'Alone Circus*. A man named Jean Arctus, another named Michel—surname unknown—and Louis Magid, who was a cousin for a short time. I have seen Arctus once at Dijon and Magid twice at Beauvais. There is a house at Beauvais called the Chateau des Colonnes; a few nights ago Magid shot a man in that chateau and dropped the body down the well."

"Most unhygienic," said Campbell severely.

"The well is not now used," said Hambleton. "There is no sewer, and the water is not fit to drink."

"Well, Magid had to go back to the house for the key."

"So the people who live there know that there is a body in the well, do they?" said Forgan. "Somebody who was in the house that night knew it, certainly, but whether he or the normally lives there is another thing. The place belongs to a middle-aged man named Fabrant but he was away from home at the time and may know nothing about it. I mean, it is possible. She lives there alone with one woman servant and a man who works in the garden, and does not know anything about it."

"Why was the man in the well, do you know?" asked Forgan.

"No. There are a lot of things I don't know. I don't know what I sent for you. I want you to go to Beauvais, you can choose whatever cover you like, and see if you can pick up anything. I am a bit hampered single-handed. Now I suggest that we go along to the office of the Quatre-Graines and see if they can tell us anything more."

When they came to the offices of the police judiciaire—the plainclothes detective branch—they found Letord waiting for them in the courtyard inside the archway.

"Sombre here, isn't it?" said Campbell in an awestruck whisper.

"Ménage," said Forgan.

Hambleton told Letord all what he had already told the other two men, but in considerably more detail. He expected Letord to react strongly to the story of a corpse in the well, but the Frenchman seemed to be more interested in who the man was.

"You saw him close—of course. You talked to him or he to you? Can you describe him?" Hambleton did not answer the police manner, which is practically a verbal photograph. "He was a thundering bore," he added. "But as I rather gathered that he was engaged in blackmail I did look at him carefully."

Letord said that the description sounded to him a little like *Peppé Fagnieu*, who was a nasty piece of work if ever there was one, and he had a nick out of his right ear as you describe. I sat beside the desk for five years when he was tried and I remember it very clearly. I will ring down for some cards and we will see." He lifted the desk telephone and instructed Records.

While they were waiting for the result, Letord turned to Forgan and Campbell.

"It was one of you to whom I had the pleasure of telephoning yesterday on behalf of Monsieur Hambleton here, was it not?"

"It was I, to whom you spoke," said Forgan with a little bow.

"Did I understand from Monsieur Hambleton," said Letord, "that you are accompanying him to Beauvais?"

"Not accompanying," said Hambleton. "Following after. You will need a car; you had better hire one here in Paris."

"No car," said Letord. "We have one."

Hambleton looked blank, and Campbell said: "The Rolls, you know. You cannot have forgotten our Rolls."

"A car of the most magnificent," said Letord politely.

"Especially this one. But we still want a driver."

We had to leave Arthur at home this time to mind the business."

"Besides," said Fergan, "we did not know that he should need him, did we? But the business does."

"I expect you can hire another," began Hambleton, when the door opened and a man came in with half a dozen cards having photographs stuck on them, full face and profile. Hambleton looked them over, picked one out and said: "That's him. No question about it."

Letrod looked at it and said: "It was right, that is Peps l'Agence, so called. So he is dead, is he? Good. We can now cross him off our files."

Even the modest and reserved Clerkwell Roud raised their eyebrows at this, and Hambleton said that that was very nice. "I was really afraid that you would consider it your duty to inform the police if a murder had been committed here."

"Certainly not," said Letrod. "I have no shadow of authority over the Beauce police, as you know perfectly well, Hambleton, if you stop to think. Who are I to add to the troubles of provincial police forces by telling them about crimes they don't know they have had? It is not as though you have informed me officially, is it? Do you want it investigated at once?"

"No," said Hambleton. "On the contrary, this case we are on is much more important than the murder of a blackmailer by a crook. No, I would much rather you told me all that you know about the Tabaret family of the Chateau des Colonnies."

"You warned me this morning that you were going to ask this," said Letrod, "so I had them looked up. They had lived in Paris for some years before the war. In 1940 Monsieur and Madame Tabaret came to the police to report that their son Lucien was missing. Age 24, height 1.75 metres, eyes blue, hair brown and so on. He was said to be a little subnormal mentally. There is a note here that no action was taken because Lucien Tabaret was said to have joined the Resistance. Letrod had some papers with a hunch. "I should think there is some confusion there. Some of us thought that quite a lot of the Resistance people they took to heart, but they did not enroll themselves if they were not sure. The records may well be mixed up there, the Paris police were working under difficulties. However, Lucien Tabaret disappeared finally, it seems."

"Plenty of people disappeared here at that time," said Hambleton quietly.

"You are right. The next reference to the Tabarets is in 1943. The daughter, Marie-Joséphine Tabaret, came to the police and complained that her father and mother were missing. It seems that they had been interrogated by the Gestapo and that had frightened them so much that they had left home and gone to live in the house of a woman named Perrain, Marthe Perrain. Three months later they had disappeared once more and it was assumed that the Gestapo had got them again. They were elderly and in poor health."

"So Mlle. Marthe Perrain was looked up too, but she also was not to be found. The daughter said that the Perrains had housed the Tabarets out of kindness and for money, of course, but that she emerged she was not a woman of good reputation in her Quartier though the police had nothing against her. She was, in fact, accused later on of having been one of Dr. Pezou's lady friends but since she had vanished like so many others."

Letrod stopped suddenly and looked at Hambleton.

"Now that is an idea. The Pezou case—"

He snatched up his telephone and told someone at the other end to send him up the papers on the Pezou case.

Fergan and Campbell appeared to Hambleton who gave them a brief and vivid sketch of the doctor's activities.

"Now Bluehead is nowhere in sight," said Letrod.

"An interesting case," said Hambleton. "My travelling companion, Victor Dinel, was talking about it the other night. Your old friend now dead, Peps l'Agence, mentioned it, though I do not see being helpful in obtaining money from people in a short."

"Oh, Oh, did you? That was the point at which you decided that this was regarded as a bad deal, is it? I should say that you are perfectly right, where are we? The old Monsieur and Madame Tabaret went to lodge with a woman later said to be an associate of Pezou. They disappeared in 1945 or more years later, a man once involved in that case

mentions that name at the gates of the Tabaret's house of Les Colonnies. Eh? Where the devil is that Pezou dossier? I think they all go to sleep in this place—"

The door opened again and a clerk came in with a stone file of papers which he laid on Letrod's desk.

"Thank you," said Letrod, seizing upon it. "Now run away, now, here we are, Tabaret, Henri Jean, Tabaret, Amélie Julie, Tabaret, Marie-Joséphine. That last, that must be a mistake, for Marie-Joséphine is the daughter who had complained to the police some months earlier that her parents were missing. She told us, when our investigations failed, that since she did not wish to live alone in Paris, she was re-opening the family place at Beauce which had been unoccupied for some years."

"It is still there," said Hambleton. "I suppose," said Hambleton slowly, "that she does not know that her parents were murdered by Pezou."

"The police did not, I think, put these inquiries together to make those two ends meet," said Letrod. Campbell shifted his feet and the others looked at him.

"The simple brother," he said, "did he ever turn up again? Was he ever proved dead by anything definite like that?"

Letrod shook his head.

"Not so far as I know. The Beauce police might know."

"Thank you," said Campbell. "Very sad, all this." "I think," said Letrod, looking at Campbell and Fergan, "that it would be as well if I found a doctor for you. We could then be sure that he is an honest and reliable man who could be trusted to keep his mouth shut and not bubble about your affairs. Eh? I know most of the rogues in Paris but I do know a few honest men also."

"I am most grateful," said Fergan. "We both are. It is not giving you too much trouble we should be glad if you would."

Hambleton left the Quai des Orphèvres with Fergan and Campbell, led them across the Pont St. Michel to the left bank, a part of Paris where no one is ever surprised at anything and took them to a café.

"Here we can eat together," he said. "If anyone thinks that we are an oddly assorted trio they will assume that I am an eccentric or a madman, but you are stammering. I have had an idea. Let us order food, for I am starving."

The idea, said Hambleton in the intervals of conversation, was this: "But you must tell me if you don't like it. Do you remember some years ago, when we were at Amaze-sur-Loire together, you, Campbell, were a nervous patient recovering from a nervous breakdown while Fergan was a doctor?"

A slow smile spread across Campbell's face.

"And a good time was had by all, as they say."

"And on this occasion?" asked Fergan. "Or do I already drive your entertaining schemes?"

"Probably. This missing brother—"

"Is me," said Campbell, nodding gently.

"Yes, but you won't say so," said Hambleton. "I assume that Mlle. Tabaret would know you were not her brother at sight even if she hasn't seen him since 1941. You will, therefore, keep out of her way which should be possible as the seldom leaves the Quartier. I, I thought, might ask and stay at the Hotel de la Poste. It's a nice place, and sign in as Lucien Tabaret. I'll ask Letrod to get you some papers. You won't claim to be the missing brother."

"Since my earliest youth," said Campbell warmly, "I have longed with every fibre of my being to be a missing brother."

"You are only drift about the town looking innocent and charming and let people assume that that is what you are. Whom you are, I mean?"

"Hambleton, do you know a reputable psychiatrist in Paris?" asked Campbell who were not.

"No," said Hambleton. "What for?"

"I should like a certificate to prove I'm sane. Not many sane people can do that, can they? Most of them, Hambleton, I think, are sane."

"You are a little off, she's four years older than Letrod for papers in the name of Lucien Tabaret they would be more probably forthcoming than if I ask for them, am I right?"

"I am not off at all," said Hambleton. "By the way, it will be quite natural for you to avoid your sister. I've just remembered what I was told in a Beauce pub one night. You can't stand your sister at any price. She's four years older than you and she used to boss you about something horrible."

"She tried to strangle you once?"

"And who am I in this story?" asked Fergan.

"My friend, my moon companion," said Campbell. "With a faint but perceptible hint of medical attendant." We have, as Hambleton points out, released them all."

"I'll try to pick up some stories of your early youth," said Hambleton. "You might, for example, have had a passion for spinach."

"Then I was grateful," said Letrod.

"Hambleton slept most of the way from Paris to Dijon, had breakfast there and took the first bus back to Beauce. Nothing particular seemed to have happened during the absence which had, indeed, only occupied 48 hours though, like most hurried journeys, it had seemed longer. Dinel was still living contentedly in the hut and was his usual placid self. Hambleton noticed that he seemed quieter than before, as though there were something on his mind, though, if there were, he did not speak of it."

A few days passed without incident and then, quite suddenly, the vineyard was full of gossip which became most vocal in the break for lunch.

"It cannot be her. What? After all these years?" "It is not it, it must be her sister's eldest sister, at the Hotel de la Poste, was the name in the book. The porter showed it to her. They are all talking about it."

"Nonsense. He died during the war, the Germans killed him."

"Who saw him dead? People come back."

"They do not wait 17 years."

"Why not? The world is a large place. I have seen him myself and it is the same. He moons about looking pleasantly at people and taking old Dupont's peaches from outside the shop just as he did."

"He will get into trouble, then—"

"Not at all. That dark man, his friend, he pays for everything."

"It must be the same! The same height, the same manner—older, of course, naturally—the same name. It is not so common, that name."

Hambleton thought it time he took an intelligent interest.

"Some wanderer who has returned, madame?"

"But yes, the brother of mademoiselle" at the chateau then, the young Tabaret, Lucien Tabaret."

Dinel, who had been paying much attention, suddenly left off chewing. Hambleton could have sworn that a whole range of expressions were following each other across what was visible of his face before he began to speak again, incredulity, credulity and puzzlement, but principally puzzlement.

"He does not say that he is her brother. They say that when the chemist asked that, he would not answer."

"He only laughed and walked away—"

"There is money there. There is a car of the most magnificent—"

"But as old as my grandmother," said the girl with the pony-tail hair. "Jules at the garage says it is 40 years old but their driver says it goes very well. He is proud of it."

"He has not used to see his sister, how say."

"As though he would! I remember how often used to fight when they were children. I have parted them myself. I used to work there before I married," said one of the older women. "That was before they went away to Paris, in the old times, before. She was not so old then, herself. The poor little boy, that Marie-Joséphine had a wicked temper. I saw her take a knife to him once."

"Do you see anything of her now?"

"Her? Oh, no, she never speaks to anyone. Well, it may be she does not remember, she was but a child when they left and the little Lucien four years younger. It's all a long time ago."

Hambleton referred to this story when he and Dinel were back in the hut that night.

"Odd, odd, isn't it? Fanc coming back after 17 years!"

"People do," said Dinel.

"Oh, yes, but it is unusual. I wonder what his sister will say—"

"If he tells her he is her brother."

"Yes, of course. One would think some of the property would belong to him, wouldn't one?"

Dinel grunted.

"It is interesting to see what happens next."

"Most interesting."

The chauffeur whom Letrod had recommended to drive the Rolls was a small and neat young man named Martin. When he first saw the Rolls he





servant at the chateau yonder," said the detective, "but I have only seen him at a distance. Doubtless his fingerprints will be on the gun, which I will take to the police station at Beaune in case this body should disappear as soon as our backs are turned upon it."

Martin picked up the rifle by the muzzle with his handkerchief and shepherded his charges back to the car at a smart pace.

The Beaune police went out and collected the body from the edge of the wood; rather to Martin's surprise it was still there. When Hamblond had heard the story that evening he went to see the chief of police.

"No difficulty about identity," said the chief, "as far as it goes. That man was the handyman and general functionary at the chateau. He was quite unknown in the town. His name is supposed to be Pierre Dupont. We are sending his prints up to Records and perhaps they will tell us some more about him. The rifle was an American Garrard and there were any number of them loose in France after the war."

Hamblond went back to the hut to find that Dinel had not yet returned. Privacy being exactly what Hamblond wanted at the moment, he fastened the door, hung an old sack over the window and lifted away from the wall a large packing case which served them as ladder and storeroom. Behind this at floor level there was a loose brick which he pulled out, expecting to find the cavity behind it empty, but his groping fingers found a familiar heavy packing rolled up in a length of oily flannel. His eyebrows went up.

"Dinel, did I do you an injustice? There were six cartridges in this magazine when I stowed it away. I wonder—"

He pulled out the magazine from the automatic—six, no, five, no, four cartridges only, and there was not one at the breech. Two were missing, and two had been fired in the wood that afternoon. Not conclusive, of course, since point three-two automatics are not so very unobtrusive but there had been six rounds in the gun two days earlier. He pulled back the breech and squinted down the barrel against the candlelight. Dear me, yes. Discharged and not cleaned since, that's what it was.

He had cleaned the automatic, reloading it, hidden it away and replaced the packing-case before Dinel returned. When he came in the door was unlocked and the window uncurtained. Hamblond was sitting by the fire placidly peeling potatoes and dropping them into a pot of stew.

"That smells extremely good," said Dinel.

"Hare," said Hamblond brightly.

"Ah?"

"It will not be done for some time yet. There is a bottle of wine in the corner, we might drink a little while we wait, shall we?"

Dinel drank and set down his glass. "The wine-harvest is nearly done, Tietoc."

Hamblond nodded. "I understand we are to be paid off at the end of the week. It has been a pleasant interlude."

Dinel sat down upon his heels, leaned back against the wall and stretched out his legs to the fire.

"Very pleasant," he murmured, "and I intend to stay on a little longer. We have saved money here and I imagine they will let us stay on here for a time."

"I am in no hurry to return to Paris, Dinel," Hamblond threw some more sticks on the fire and stirred the stew. "Let us refill our glasses. Good. Now tell me, Dinel, why did you take my gun out and shoot that man in the wood today?"

Dinel statted, but not so convulsively as to spill his wine.

"Your gun? I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Come off it, Dinel. Why all this fuss, are we not friends? As far as I know, he was no law. He was trying to murder one or both of those two men who are staying at the Pote and it was a good deed to prevent it."

Dinel relaxed slowly and even produced a sheepish grin.

"You are right, Tietoc. I don't know, why I did it—no, you started me. I did know that you had a gun, Tietoc. I have seen it when you taught I was asleep but I never spoke of it from motives of delicacy, Tietoc. Since you didn't mention it, I would not."

"Thank you, Dinel, that was like you. But what prompted you to take it this afternoon?"

"I have been uneasy ever since I saw that dead man by the well at the chateau. There are dangerous people about here, Tietoc. When I was preparing to go out this afternoon it came over me suddenly that unless I had the gun I could not go out. Besides, there is the pot. I thought that I saw a pleasant it would be good eating and that was my second motive, Tietoc. Where did you get the hare?"

"In the shoulder and the other bang through the head, so they say in the town."

"Oh, I can shoot," said Dinel indifferently. "It was the same Tietoc. I was working my way up through the wood when that man came up from the chateau, running, and he carried a rifle. He is the general handyman at the chateau, did you know that? I thought he looked dangerous. I followed him quietly. I learned how to do that—oh, a long time ago. He went on to the edge of the wood, had behind a tree and waited, and very soon these two from the Pote came strutting up the hill. When they came within range he fired at them; three times, Tietoc. I could not stand there and see them shot down."

Hamblond went to Paris to see Letord, travelling in the Kolls driven by Det.-Sgt. Martin. Forpan and Campbell went with them, not that they particularly wanted to visit Paris at that moment, but because Martin's conscience would not permit him to leave them behind to be shot at. They were deposited in the Place de la Concorde and told to be good until Paris was back again.

Letord's welcome of Hamblond was as warm as ever; when it became clear that he was alone the welcome became even warmer.

"I shall tell me all about everything," he said. "Begin at the point when you last came out of this room and go straight on till you returned here 10 minutes ago."

Hamblond obeyed while Letord sat at his desk snapping a thin black cigar, making notes from time to time and sipping a glass of red wine.

"We have made some progress," finished Hamblond, having at last pinned the d'Alroy Circus of some of its lesser twigs. "Gaston, in the Passage Stinville. That fellow who took Campbell for a nice drive and swallowed his own dope—"

"That's right," said Letord, "and now, Monsieur Campbell was quite right, the artist's portrait was among those I produced from my pretty picture-gallery. He was concerned in that kidnapping case at Barritz."

Hamblond nodded. "There is also Pierre Dupont who was shot dead yesterday, but not by Martin. I handed in his tale on my way up here. He should be identified by now," said Letord, and applied himself to the telephone. "What? Oh, yes, I remember. Yes, thank you. I shall wait it but not at this precise moment. The man is now dead, by the way." He put back the receiver. "That one is a man whom we wanted for robbery with violence in Paris 10 years ago. He spent a long time in jail before that for murder and was discharged in 1945. Now, please."

"Mad. Mard is around the chateau. He does not come out much but one sees him occasionally. I saw him out into the Happy Traveller at midday yesterday."

"Yes, Colin from Marseilles wants him for child murder."

"And there is Jean Artaux, the man with his nose bent toward the left. He is a man of superior education, appears so. I have seen him in Beaune but he may live in Dijon. Someone was trying to sell him a wireless set in a cafe there."

"We do not know Artaux," said Letord. "He wrote a name on his pad and decorated it with a frame of horns, hoots and spoked tails."

"But I still have no idea who is the one man I want to find, the organizing head of the d'Alroy gang."

"But you think the chateau—"

"I am perfectly sure that the Chateau des Colomes is the centre of all this, but that's not to say that the case necessarily lives there."

"Who lives at the chateau?"

"Mademoiselle Tabaret and a bonne-tout-faire, very dear. And of course, hitherto but not henceforward, Dupont the odd-job boy. I have seen him. I have my doubts about that Tabaret woman. She keeps herself to herself and doesn't show herself at all friendly in the town though the lived here till she was 14 and must remember quite a lot of

the people. They remember her all right. The chateau is a crumbling place, I suspect it might conceivably be used for purposes of which the knew nothing—"

"What? A woman in her own house? People coming and going and she was not to hear or see? Nonsense," said Letord explosively.

"And it is a fact that she was away from home the night that fellow was shot and dropped down the well. She may be blackening the walls of the chateau."

"People are," agreed Letord. "In the meantime, I have got hold of someone who might be able to help you. He picked up the telephone. 'Is Madame Grey coming along and she was not to hear or see? Nonsense,' said Letord explosively."

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for them or go to the doctor for what was wanted."

"The doctor," said Hambleton, "Dr. Petiot, monsieur, for he had a surgery just around the corner in the Rue Cuvierin. He was accused of terrible things later on and I believe he was guillotined for murder, but he was very attentive to the poor m'a'melle. I saw him often when he came." Madame Guy's kindly face darkened. "Marthe Perrain and he became very friendly from that time on."

"I suppose it was some months before Madame Perrain could walk at all."

"Many, many months. Marthe Perrain had had work before the war, as a beauty salon, and then she was in a shop and then in a hotel. Then, early in 1942 she went to work in Dr. Petiot's nursing home up near the Etoile in the Rue Laurier. She was after she burned her hand. She upset a pan of hot fat over her left hand and burned it, ah, badly! I heard her scream and I rushed up and she was in agony, truly. I ran for Dr. Petiot and he came. It healed very well but there was a mark of the most unsightly, the back of her hand bright scarlet and the snows standing up. Time went on for—how can I tell!—another year. Yes, yes, in the summer of 1943 Gertrude came and introduced the Tabarous about their son, Monsieur Lucien. Then the Germans went away and I went up and they were all as it were at the door of death from fright. The old mothers, believe that they must get out of Paris and go to Besaine where their own people would conceal them, and they hid me telephone to Marthe Perrain to come and help them, as I did."

"She came, did she?"

"Yes, monsieur, and she agreed that they must get away at once. For another dose of Gertrude will kill them," she said, "and all their valuables and small things and two days later they went away and I never saw them again, monsieur, not even after the war."

Madame Guy smiled and wiped her eyes, which were tearful at the last. "I think I have told you everything, monsieur, and if not, Monsieur Letord knows where I live."

She was thanked, complimented, escorted off the premises, and sent home in a police car. Hambleton and Letord, alone in the office, looked at each other.

"And there are people," said Hambleton explosively, "who do not believe in the devil. That Marthe Perrain—"

"I am a good Roman Catholic," said Letord, and surprisingly crossed himself. "I believe what I am told."

"Letord, whoever the woman is at the Chateau des Colonnes, it is not the Tabarot daughter. The woman at the chateau wears with long swinging strides and has never been lame in her life."

"If she has the scar of a burn on the back of her left hand, she is probably Marthe Perrain," said Letord. "She could have impersonated Madame Perrain Tabarot to the police when she reported the old people missing. Moreover, she must find a new identity for herself—when Petiot is discovered and no doubt the Tabarots told her all about Besaine."

"Yes. But even if it is Marthe Perrain at the chateau," said Hambleton heavily, "this is not to say that she is the head of the d'Alroy Circus."

"No, indeed, but what a handle for blackmail if one wished to make use of the chateau, here?" He suggested that yourself. What do you now?"

"Return to Besaine," said Hambleton, "and go on digging."

## CHAPTER IX

HAMBLETON went back to Besaine in the Rolls with Martin, Campbell and Forgan taking it in turns to drive. They reached Besaine a little after 11 and Hambleton had prepared a story to tell Dinet, their butler if he should ask. But Dinet was wrapped in rags and his coat and barely stirred when Hambleton went in. He had been very quiet for some time past, as Hambleton had noticed.

On the next morning, having no longer any work to do, Hambleton went unobtrusively to the back door of the police station and asked to see the chief of police. He was shown in and offered cigarettes and a glass of wine.

"I have something to tell you," said Hambleton. "I saw Monsieur Letord in Paris yesterday and he agrees that you should be told." Hambleton took

a preliminary cup of wine, lit a cigarette, leaned back in his chair and gave the chief a long perusal of Mme. Guy's evidence from first to last.

The chief listened in silence; only, as the tale drew to its close, his jaw came forward and two little muscles twitched at its angles.

"Do you happen to know, Monsieur le Chef, whether the woman at the chateau has the scar of a burn on her left hand?"

"I do not," said the chief, always, as women of the better class habitually do. But, if your witness yesterday is to be believed, she cannot be Madame Perrain Tabarot. She is an impersonator. What could she be, that the people here have accepted her. They must have known her well."

"She left Besaine when she was 14."

"I see. And women change as they grow up, yes."

"I do not," said Hambleton, "but Monsieur le Chef, none of this is much help in the problem which brought me here, which is to find the leader of the d'Alroy Circus. That woman is, perhaps, blackmailed into lending them the chateau as a headquarters."

"She would be a good subject for blackmail," said Hambleton. "I had what may possibly be a better thought. I won't put it higher than that. There must be messages sent out from the chateau, to gang members elsewhere. I was wondering whether we could learn a few names and addresses, or even telephone numbers. I wonder whether I could talk to the postmaster?"

"I have no doubt we could approach him," said the chief. "Such matters are confidential, but between us we might persuade him."

Ten minutes later Hambleton was in the private room of an incredulous and faintly resentful postmaster.

"I have seen this person about the town," he said. "Am I indeed to understand that he is a person of credit?"

"No, monsieur," said the chief of police stoutly. "This matter, which we have now upon our carpet, is a criminal investigation of the utmost importance and he would not be here at all. If you can assist—"

The postmaster closed his eyes and his mouth really prefer not to see what he before him."

"If the monsieur will ask his questions."

Hambleton went straight to the point.

"The chateau des Colonnes is connected with the telephone service. I know, because I have seen the wires go up to the house. Do the residents of the chateau make much use of the telephone?"

"No, monsieur."

"It meant, actually, long-distance calls rather than local ones."

"So I assumed, monsieur. They do, indeed, occasionally make use of the telephone to give orders to the Besaine tradespeople, though normally the elderly man who does the gardening comes down with a basket and a list of requirements, and, more rarely, the old, very old woman servant who, I see, indeed, said the postmaster, looking away into an unplumbed distance, "something of a mystery that the chateau maintains a telephone service on all, they use it so little. As for long-distance calls, no."

"Oh. Many letters?"

"Letters? No. Very few letters."

"Oh," said Hambleton, rather dejected. "Possibly Madame Perrain Tabarot communicates by telephone. There is also," said the postmaster cordially, "the telegraphic service, useful in communicating with persons not themselves on the telephone."

He hesitated, puzzled.

"Do they use that method?"

"More than any other. These telegrams are not telephoned to this office from the Chateau des Colonnes, they are always written out in full upon telegraph forms and brought here by the gardener."

He referred to earlier, I believe that his name was Pierre Dupont. He is, I understand, now dead, having suffered a shooting accident up on the hill the day before yesterday."

"That is correct," said the chief of police.

"Tell me about these telegrams," said Hambleton. "Are they sent out singly, or to a number of persons at once, or to—"

Sometimes one and sometimes several. Last February, as I remember, there were six."

"I suppose," began Hambleton, but was interrupted by the postmaster, who seemed to have taken a dislike to him.

"There were two curious points about these telegrams," he said, firmly addressing the chief of police. "One was that whenever there was more

than one, the telegrams were all the same. Except, of course, for the names and addresses, the messages were identical. The other curious point was that always, every time, the vendange was mentioned. Since our wine harvest occurs only in September, it seemed to me—though I am not a famous detective—peculiar to have it referred to in February or April or January."

"What," said the chief, "did this formula suggest to you?"

"In my own mind I thought that m'a'melle was playing the stock markets. Not that it was any business of mine."

"But it is," continued the chief, with a glance at Hambleton. "She was using a pre-arranged code, of course. Did all the telegrams go to Paris?"

"By all means. Three to Paris, if my memory serves me, one to Marseille, one to Lyon and one to Lille."

"I suppose," said Hambleton meekly, "that you have not the originals of these telegrams still?"

"I may have, monsieur. I will cause a search to be made."

"No, we wait? Or come back in an hour's time?"

"Shall we," said the postmaster. "I will search at once and send you what I can find across your office in a sealed envelope."

Hambleton went back to the police station by appointment an hour later.

"Any luck with the telegrams?"

"The postmaster rang up to say that he had found some and that he would send them across shortly. Sit down, Monsieur Hambleton, it cannot now be long to wait."

A messenger came in with a stout envelope addressed to Hambleton. He tore it open and found contained about a dozen telegraph forms of which six bore the date of February 10, the others, in fives and threes, were of later dates. The messages varied slightly in their details, but they all mentioned vendange and a Friday. "Come to the vendange on Friday," said the six in February. The chief of police and Hambleton looked through them together.

"There are only six names after all," said the chief. "These later ones are to some of the same people again. Is it not odd that there is here no Magic, no Faust, no—"

"Headquarters," said Tommy Hambleton cheerfully. "These telegram-receivers are the reapers in more distant fields, don't you agree? I am so glad that you do. Have you, by any chance, any telegraph forms in stock?"

"What," said the chief, scrabbling at the back of a stationery drawer, "did you propose doing? Here they are."

"Today is Monday. Let us send out a general call to the six gentlemen severally referred to in these documents, being careful to refer to the vendange. They will then, we trust, all arrive here on Friday and we can see how they run and cut off their tails with a carving-knife. Eh? Good. How shall we word it?"

"I don't doubt that it matters much about the exact wording so long as it mentions the vendange."

When the chief, looking over Hambleton's shoulder.

"When the forms were all completed, the chief picked them up. "I will send—no, I will take them across myself. I am sure they will get a better reception than if you, monsieur, were to take them."

"I am quite sure that you are right. Tell me one thing, monsieur. Is there any legal or customary objection to a poor man carrying a basket, franc carrying luggage from the station for passengers who arrive?"

"No by-laws, but it would not do to tread on the toes of the taxmen in uniform, or the taxi drivers picking up fares and so on."

"Of course not. I think I'll start tomorrow and then by Friday everyone will be used to the sight of me. After all, no poor man vendange is at an end, a poor man must do something to scrape up a few francs."

"It is heavy work, monsieur."

"I'll pick out the light ones," grinned Tommy Hambleton.

He went back to the hut that night with some strips of quite passable stout for Dinet to toast before the fire and was in time to help him peel the potatoes.

"It is a little sad, isn't it," said Hambleton, "that the vendange is now over here in Besaine?"

"You enjoyed it in the end, did you not? Al-

though you grumbled so at the hard work when we started. Peel those potatoes thinner—you are wasting time."

"Yes, I did enjoy it. There is something about the wine harvest which takes one back to a golden age of classical antiquity, about 2,000 years ago."

"Rubbish," said Dinel firmly, "absolute rubbish. The golden age was always a century or more ago even to Horace. It is a comment upon modern civilization that the golden age is 2,000 years ago. Even a myth will not follow us into these present days. It retreats farther into its laured thickets and lets us go alone."

Hambledon was so surprised as to be almost speechless. Dinel had always been something of a mystery but so are most tramps; they keep their secrets and care does not probe, but they seldom include a knowledge of Gothic art and a classical education. He changed the subject.

During the next three days Beaune became accustomed to seeing a bearded tramp hanging about the railway station offering to carry any luggage which was plainly not too heavy. He was obviously anxious not to tread upon the toes of established custom. He was evidently poor and he spoke of filling in a week or two before returning to Paris. He was, therefore, allowed to sit up in the matter of small jobs at the station, the crumbs that fell from richer men's tables.

On Friday, he was there all day and met every train that came in. The time dragged rather slowly. Some time in the afternoon Dinel passed the station on one of his aimless rambles, he merely raised a hand in passing and did not say to speak to him. Eventually the 7:15 p.m. train from Paris came in, and from it six men alighted in a sort of loose group which suggested that they had probably travelled together. They did not keep to a gangway, they drifted off in twos and threes; with one exception they carried only the lightest luggage in the form of small satchels or cases as it would be an insult to a man to carry a cane for him.

He saw six men, two of whom carried two cases each, which were not large but obviously heavy, he lagged behind the others and prevaricated the only chance. Tommy sighed deeply and stilled up to him. "Carry your lot, monsieur."

"What? I'm afraid they're a bit heavy." "Where to, monsieur?"

"To the Happy Traveller." "Happy Traveller? Very good, monsieur." The traveller put his two bags down, threw back his shoulders with a sigh of relief, in a cigarette and strolled off. Hambledon picked up the bags, groaned internally and followed after.

At a street crossing the traveller and his porter passed a policeman on point duty who looked at them just a second longer than is normal in a policeman on point duty.

At the bottom of the hill upon which stands the Happy Traveller, they passed a chauffeur very smart in uniform who took not the slightest notice of either of them.

The traveller must have been a humane man by nature or when it did not conflict with his personal interests, for when he was carrying about the size of his porter exultantly and lagging behind, he stooped off Hambledon came up.

"Take it easy, old man," said the traveller. "Stop a bit and get your breath, I'm sorry about the bags, but that's the worst of books. They do weigh heavy. Isn't that the Happy Traveller up there on the right?"

"Yes, monsieur," said the porter, wiping his face. "I'll go on up and you follow on. I reckon you've earned a drink on the top of your pay and you shall have one up there. Take your time, old chap."

Hambledon thanked him and the traveller walked on and turned into the entrance of the Happy Traveller, glancing back as he did so.

When he finally staggered into the Happy Traveller all six men were at the bar, and Hambledon's employer was looking out for him. He hurried across the room and led Hambledon—still borne up to the bar. Hambledon's employer drew the stout man on the floor with a perfectly genuine sigh of relief. His employer, a stout and squat man with a coarse skin, the long drink of beer for which "Hambledon" was famous, drew the stout man close to his own feet. The first glass of beer merely died slightly as it went down, the stout man laughed kindly and ordered another. Hambledon thanked him and took that one much more slowly.

The six men were talking casually together as men do who do not know each other well. Hambledon's stout employer, a man who seemed to be almost a stranger to the other five. The proprietor of the Happy Traveller dodged up and down the bar filling the orders, with heady but eyes watching everyone.

Presently there was the sound of a car pulling up outside. One of the men glanced out of the window and uttered an exclamation, whereupon the other five others also turned around and comments became general.

"A veritable museum-piece." "Someone has bought it in the Fica-Market." "Yes, another man of the type who is always ready to instruct, nonsense. It is an English Rolls and probably extremely valuable."

Hambledon did not look around but noticed with interest that at the words "English Rolls" the patron behind the bar awoke to startled life and came around the bar to look out of the window.

The next moment the door opened and Campbell came in, closely followed by Fargan; they walked up to the bar and the proprietor hurried around to serve them. Fargan ordered two glasses of wine and discussed with the proprietor what it should be while Campbell looked at everyone, including Hambledon, with wide and silly smile.

"This room," said the proprietor in a low voice, "is perhaps a little crowded for the messieurs." He glanced from Fargan to Campbell and back again. "We have a pleasant small room at the back here with a window looking down the valley. It is more private if the messieurs would prefer it?"

"Thank you," said Fargan. "It would perhaps be better." "This way," said the proprietor, and opened the door behind the bar. He then had to lift the flap of the curtain to let them pass, and Campbell drifted through, looking about him.

A few minutes later the proprietor came back and walked across the room and out at the front door to speak to the driver of the Rolls. The messieurs very do not wait for them. They will walk back to the town when they are ready."

"Very good," said the driver with no change of countenance. He started the engine of the Rolls and drove smoothly away toward the town.

A few minutes later two of the party at the far side of the room finished their wine and said that they supposed they must be getting on. They came up to the bar and paid for their drinks, fumbled in their pockets for something so small for Hambledon to see and passed whatever it was to the proprietor. He opened the flap with one hand and with the other tossed the two objects into a box under the bar—a tin box; the small sharp rattles were unmistakable. The two men nodded, opened the farther door for themselves and went out, shutting it after them. They were plainly men who had been there before and knew their way.

The next to go was Hambledon's employer, who came to him and paid him, with a friendly word, returned to the bar and paid them and then picked up his heavy little suitcase. Hambledon immediately smiled across but was waved away.

"No, thanks, I can manage now." He also gave some small object to the proprietor and then went out through the door. The other five men do not carry their luggage—unless it is quite unusually valuable—with them upon unimportant and momentary errands. Hambledon waited for him to be back but he did not; instead a pair went out behind the bar with another passing of tokens, if that were what they were, and more tiny rattles as the things fell in the box.

The last came to the bar and handed over his keys; the flap was thrown back for him but he looked at the proprietor and said: "Where do I go?"

"Oh! You're new, aren't you? Down the stairs and the third box on the left—I'd best come and show you."

They went out together and Hambledon was left for the moment alone in the bar. He slipped around the end of it and looked under there was a tin box and a small little round hole in it. He picked one out and went back to his corner.

Hambledon felt in his pocket for a short length of black thread, slipped it through the ring and tied the end of it around his forehead so that he could see in the dark. When the proprietor came back, Hambledon asked him the time.

"Ten minutes before 21 hours." "Yes, that's all right, I suppose I'd better get along to this conference."

He moved along the bar to open the flap but the man in the third box on the left said:

"I've seen you in here before."

"Why not? I hope you will again. I saw you didn't recognize me, but you probably would with all this hair on my face," Hambledon, speaking good Paris French and the man-stared. "Come on, open the flap," added Hambledon. "I shall be late."

"But the—that you have to show me—"

"Oh, yes, I forgot," Hambledon pulled up his sleeve and brought the token into view. This knot won't come—oh, yes, it will. Here you are. Is it still the third box on the left?"

"Yes, monsieur. Everything is the same." Hambledon nodded and went out by the same door as all the others; even as he turned in the doorway to shut it after him he saw the front door of the café opening and Dinel in the act of coming in. Hambledon did not wait, he had quite enough upon his plate at the moment without adding Dinel.

He looked around him, he was in a sort of back hall, brick-floored, with various doors opening from it; he glanced into storerooms and a kitchen and scullery, all unoccupied at the moment and holding no sign of Dinel or Campbell. Near by, a flight of brick stairs led down to darkness below.

Hambledon pattered down the stairs, torch in hand, the place was so dark that one might expect the walls were lined with wire racks, nearly all full of bottles. What was it—the third box on the left?

The third box was plainly dimmer when one's attention had once been drawn to it, the wire racks covered a door and not the solid wall. Normally it was padlocked but the lock hung idly from its hinge. Hambledon did his hand upon the door; it opened silently upon further darkness within and Hambledon passed through.

After a moment he switched on his torch again and saw that he was in a small cellar with a passage leading off to the right. The walls were of brick, shallow steps going upwards to another door standing open. Within this was a much wider space with squat round pillars holding up the coiled roof. This place was a large vaulted cellar, the Chateau de Colomines, subterranean cellar is honeycombed with such accommodation.

He went on, though the direction was no longer obvious. Since they were following the contour of a hill upwards, there should be another flight of steps—

His torch went out.

As Dinel entered the room of the Happy Traveller he did, in fact, both see and recognize his companion Tictac going out through the back door, but he made no sign and asked no question. He walked up the bar and ordered a glass of wine and the proprietor annoyed him by demanding payment before the wine was served.

Presently the proprietor came out from behind the bar, crossed over to the window and looked out. A odd thing to do when it was dark, except for the Happy Traveller's own terrace lights. Some people have an uneasy sixth sense which tells them when a cat is near, with some other people a similar sense informs them of approaching police. Perhaps the proprietor was one of these last and certainly there were plenty of police approaching. They were surrounding the place, including the Chateau de Colomines on all sides. Dinel knew he was more than unfortunate if the proprietor saw any of them and gave the alarm. Dinel went into action.

He finished his wine, set the glass down loudly enough to attract attention, sidled along the bar and opened the flap. The proprietor looked around and jumped to the natural conclusion that the rough-looking tramp had designs on the till.

The proprietor, who had been on the room like a charging buffalo, preparing for a launch a kick which would stop the tramp in hospital for months. Unfortunately for the proprietor, the tramp had both arms and legs, and the police, in a moment of confusion, was much more active than he looked.

The kick went wide of the mark, the tramp moved quickly and unexpectedly and the proprietor sailed through the air and landed destructively upon a small table and two light chairs in the corner. Dinel went

over and looked at him with professional interest. His eyes could have remained so far some time. The police could have him.

Dinel turned on his heel and went about his business.

Hamblendon shook the torch but there was not even a flash. Someone had opened a door some where, though no light was visible, and Hamblendon was completely lost. He listened and heard no sound, he felt that he was not alone but that might have been imagination.

"What I want," he murmured in the interest whisper, "is a luminous compass." At that point he gasped very much more loudly than he had spoken, because a hand was laid upon his arm and another voice spoke in the faintest mutter.

"Not that way, monsieur; there is a well. Three more steps and you are in it. This way."

"Oh," said Hamblendon, "Thank you."

"Sh-h. Not to speak."

The man knew his way very well, and that was a little odd because, although his voice was pitched low as to be almost inaudible, it still reminded Tommy of Dinel's. Unlikely, but just possible.

At that point Hamblendon bumped into something round and a little higher than his knee, a barrel, very natural object in a cellar, but he was a vineyarder, and Hamblendon trailed his fingers across the top of it and shuddered so convulsively that his guide noticed it.

"What's the matter?" he breathed.

"Barrel—with cement in it."

"Oh, yes. By-products of Chateau industry. Charming people, you know. Two faces forward and then up the stairs. The door just opposite. Quite safe with care. Look has been sold. Inside, there is all the trouble-monsieur could wish to find."

Hamblendon received the gentlest push on his arm, the next moment his guide had gone.

Hamblendon took two steps forward and kicked against some obstruction. He leaned carefully forward and found it to be the bottom step of a flight of stone stairs worn into wood. After 15 steps the stone changed for wood, and he had to stop, deeper and narrower. He hesitated and presently came to the stairhead upon a passage running both ways. Here it was not completely dark and he could see that the door facing him. He laid his hand very carefully upon the handle, and found which yielded at once without a sound. It had indeed been oiled and so had the hinges, for the door came toward him in complete silence.

He found himself upon a wooden gallery some 15 feet above the floor of the room it overlooked, a beautiful room, panelled all around and with a wide, open fireplace at the farther end. It was lit below by electric lights hanging upon the wall and from the ceiling. These had green glass shades, so that while Hamblendon himself was in deep shadow the room below was brightly lit.

It had a long and immensely heavy oak table down the middle; at the end of this in a large oak chair sat a woman with black hair drawn straight back from strong, angular features. She had her hands upon the table before her. Even from where Hamblendon stood he could see that the back of her left hand bore a deep purple scar. There were nine men sitting at the table, they were so much beneath Hamblendon that it was difficult for him to recognize them with any certainty, but there were two more men about whom there could be no mistake: Forgan and Campbell sprawling upon a great Normandy settle against the wall to the left. They were tied up with ropes and appeared to be unconscious.

Mademoiselle, at the head of the table, was addressing the meeting as Hamblendon entered.

"—say you did not send those telegrams and I believe you if only because none of you knows all the addresses. I did not send them. I did not even know you were here till Pignatelli rang up the Happy Traveller. The man who usually sent them—he knew your addresses—he is dead. He was shot."

Someone asked who did that.

"I don't know. There have been several awkward things happening lately. Baptiste—I sent him out to do a job and he had a road accident and was picked up by the police. They wanted him so we have lost him. There is a Monsieur Perrain."

Now there is Lucien Tabart over there," she nodded toward the settle, "with his attendant. They must go. We will see to that in a minute, but first I want

to say that I think we should all scatter. I suggest that we do not meet again for at least three months. Ah, yes, Youin." She was addressing the squat man whose heavy cane Hamblendon had carried from the station. "You have brought with you the proceeds of the Swiss job, have you?"

"Yes, madame. They are there, against the wall by the fireplace. Gold bars."

"I told you that it would be gold bars. Very good. I will get rid of them as quickly as I can, and then send each of you your share by post as usual."

Madame had a hard and incisive voice and even while the men around the table murmured assent, Hamblendon found time to consider the profits of this organization must be good indeed to induce this bunch of toughs to tolerate being addressed as though they were mentally deficient juvenile delinquents by a female with a face like a volcano.

"Is the cement ready mixed, Jules?" she asked.

"In the barrels, madame."

"Very well. You will put them in the barrels and then they can be stowed in the cellars with the others. But finish these bars, Magid."

Magid rose to his feet from his place next below Hamblendon, and stalked slowly across the room, drawing his gun as he went. Forgan and Campbell stirred on the settle and looked steadily at Magid as he came, and the woman at the head of the table stood up; even as Hamblendon drew his automatic he wondered why, and then it dawned upon him. She wanted to see the shot.

Magid began to talk in that calm, reassuring voice of his.

"I am so sorry, truly, but this has to be. This will not hurt at all, indeed, you will not feel it."

Hamblendon tested his Luger upon the rail of the gallery, took careful aim and shot Magid straight through the head.

There was an immediate uproar among the party below, who all sprang to their feet, except the woman, who sat down abruptly.

Hamblendon nearly followed her example as a loud and imperative voice rang through the hall below.

"Sit down! Put your hands up! Messieurs, madame, sit down, you that are covered."

Hamblendon stepped back into the shadow of the doorway as a figure stalked in through a door below. Dinel, unmistakably Dinel, though his police and his manner were different. His head was bowed and his shoulders straight, but he was a much younger and surprisingly masterful. He held in his hands a large and elaborate pin-fire revolver, a cavalry weapon of about the 1880's. The men around the table cheered, all but one, who turned and ran. There was a thunderous bang, the man—

it was Jean Ariant—sprang around and crashed to the floor, for the ball had hit him in the shoulder.

"—works," said Dinel delightedly. "Messieurs, madame, you see that it works. Wonderful what you can pick up in antique shops in Beausé. He strolled around to the head of the table to face the woman at the other end. You are sensible to behave yourselves, for beside me there is also, I think, a friend of mine in the gallery. I am glad to be here to see the end of this mystery, shall we call it the Mystery of the Chateau des Colonnes? You are, you madame, you are. You were a friend of the Mademoiselle Marie-Josephine Tabart but you are not, you know. She died a long time ago at the hands of death, kind Dr. Petiot, and I've only just found that out. You were a friend of his, were you not? And now you're in a little more trouble because her brother turns up, you were going to put him in the cement barrel, weren't you? For one thing, you see, you are in a bad time, the police will be here in a moment. For

another, you've got another shock coming. That man is no more a Tabart; that you are. He's another impostor, my dear madame."

The woman sprang to her feet.

"What the devil are you?"

Dinel, he looked and waved the revolver gracefully.

"Lucien Tabart, very much at your service, madame. I'm sorry you mistook that fellow for me. I may have been a little eccentric when I was young but I was never so completely giddy as that. You ought to have known better than that, we met several times before the war, did we not? I think that you are Marthe Perrain, are you not? Never mind, he told me the police, we can sort all that out presently."

The police rushed in at several doors and rounded up the company; Hamblendon ran down the stairs and shook Dinel warmly by the hand.

"Thank you very much, Dinel, you've been a great help."

"Ah, Tictoc! And, while we are clearing up mysteries, who the devil are you?"

Hamblendon told him. "I came down here to break up this gang, and thanks to you, I've done it."

"Ah, yes. I had several guesses as to who and what you were but I never thought of that one. And who is your personator, now being untied by the kindly police?"

"One of my assistants."

"Indeed? I take it that distrust manner is in some of the assistants. Hamblendon nodded. Dinel sought and then looked thoughtfully around the room.

"I never meant to come back here, Tictoc—excuse me! I thought my sister was living comfortably here and I didn't want to disturb her with her, either. It was only when Lucie madame there and knew she wasn't Marie-Josephine that I decided to take a look at the place."

"That was the day we were working in the vineyard and—well, we saw her striding up the road with a man behind her carrying her bag. I thought something had started you."

"Sister? Yes, I know me Tictoc. Given food for thought, perhaps, but you can't truthfully say I looked startled."

You looked as though someone had just banged you on the head with a rubber mallet. I thought, honestly—Dinel—I mean Tabart—it was from that moment that I thought there was something fishy about mademoiselle."

"Sister? Yes, I know me Tictoc. Given food for thought, perhaps, but you can't truthfully say I looked startled."

"So now," continued Hamblendon, "I suppose you'll have this place swept and garnished, decontaminated and reforested?"

"And the well cleaned out?"

"As you say, and then settle down quietly for the rest of a happy and useful life."

"I don't know, Tictoc. I don't know. I had a bad bang during the war and I think I am fixed in the Resistance. I can't settle down. I asked about my parents and heard that they were among Periot's travellers, that was rather shocking, you know. I thought I would have survived and I wanted nothing to do with her. So I went on the tramp and now I've come to like it. It's the only life, Tictoc, where nobody has any control over you at all. No wages, no work, no money, no cupboard over her where the drinks were kept."

He walked across and examined the panelling below the gallery and presently a little door swung open.

"My father tamed me when I was eight for finding out how this worked. My goodness, it hasn't been touched! A Pomard 1929. Tictoc, on your knees. And be careful, even so, of my father's glasses. And, of course, a cork-neck."

"No," said Dinel some time later. "I don't think I can sit down in one place, not even for this. The winter is coming here long and I think I shall take a little stroll all down the Rhone valley to Marseilles and the Côte d'Azur."

"May the sun shine for you," said Hamblendon.

"Thank you. But I shall come back sometimes. You know I shall come back for very good reasons next year and the next and always. Confound this Pomard, it's making me positively maudlin. Tictoc, will you come back next year and stay with me here for a few months? And I will sell you several grapes again and get strong by ways in most inaccessible places—is it a promise?"

"It's a promise," said Tommy Hamblendon.

THE END

## COMING NEXT WEEK!

Awaiting execution in a San Mateo prison, the adventurous Ed Cook, strong and well, is in a predicament that could be equally fatal, and in the most unlikely spot on the global Rescue mission, when he is picked up by a yacht, then disaster strikes again!

## THE SARGASSO PEOPLE

Exciting adventure and suspense

by Whit Masterson